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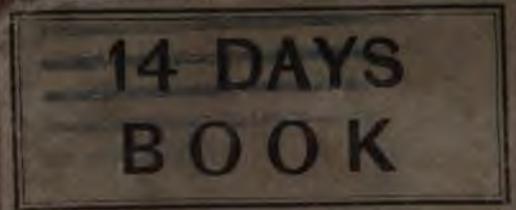
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A DRAMA IN DREGS
A LIFE STUDY



CORALIE GLYN



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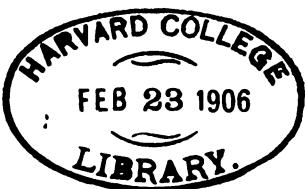
A DRAMA
IN DREGS.

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A DRAMA IN DREGS:
A LIFE STUDY: BY
THE HON. CORALIE GLYN

PUBLISHED BY SIMPKIN, MARSHALL,
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J. E. Chase,
Boston

PROLOGUE.



PROLOGUE.

ONCE long ago I had a dream.

And in this dream I saw three Visions. And as I gazed, lo ! I beheld how that Past and Future, Life and Death, were blent into one whole. And this whole was in its infinity even as a cycle of the Universe.

The first Vision was of the East, and was incarnate with all the loveliness of long-dead worlds. A youth, rose-crowned and radiant, wandered, laughing, through a valley red with roses, and all about him were his comrades, likewise crowned with red and gold-leaved roses. The flowers as of an earthly Paradise gleamed around their footsteps, whilst the olive-groves shone silvery, and the musk of myriad blossoms was wafted through the air, together with the melodies of blithesome singers chanting of youth and love.

And to myself I said :

Lo! this is the adolescence of the world. The rhythm of life, the colour, perfume, joyance of the Golden Age

PROLOGUE.

is here. Assuredly in heaven or earth, on land or sea, nought lovelier may be found ?

Then as I lay still dreaming, there came a Voice which spoke to me, and said :

“ Fool ! self-deceived by thine own dreams, that which thou worshippest holds but the brief and brilliant bloom of one sole day. With the sunrise it is born, and with the sunset it must perish ! Even at noon-tide, when at zenith of its fairness, the canker already consumes the core of the lily, the aphis already devours the heart of the rose. Lo ! is corruption beautiful ? or is there fairness in decay ? ”

Then half-abashed I bent my head, even as a chidden child, whose soul still yearns towards some forbidden sweetness.

And after a space the Voice spoke once more, and said :

“ Gaze now upon this Vision of another life ! ”

And as I gazed, before me uprose the Vision of a desolate garden. No purple vines, no lusty-leaved pomegranates nor red-and-gold bloomed roses flowered in this barren land. Only a few dark cypress trees—eternal emblem of all mortal woe—upraised their mournful crests towards the storm-swept skies, whilst the chill winds wailed wearily about their stems. And in the midst of this drear, sombre place stood One alone. And on his face was all the sorrow of a man ; and from his eyes shone all the pity of a god !

And the Voice beside me said :

PROLOGUE.

“ See ! here thou may’st behold the purity of pity,
the passion of renunciation—the divinity of love ! ”

And as I looked, far off from this lone figure, yet still following in his steps, full many others came. And on their faces shone some pale reflection of the beauty of *his* face; and on their brows, as on *his* brows, was pressed a crown of cypress interwoven with thorns. Then I said :

“ Behold, I have now gazed upon the Vision of two lives. One, the rose-crowned and blithesome image of those days when the world still was young—the other the mournful vision of those days when all the flowers of pleasure have paled into the flowers of pain. But yet I know not which to choose ! ”

Then the Voice spoke again and said :

“ O child of man, still self-deceived by thine own purblindness. For the last time I bid thee gaze on a wondrous Vision ! ”

And then I looked again, and I beheld how on the brows of those pale, sorrowing ones—who once had worn the thorn-and-cypress crown—now lay a fresh crown, most rare, most wonderful, all interwoven with dazzling white Star-flowers, and with the fair-hued asphodels of the Immortals.

And I bent my head and said :

“ Behold ! these crowns are the fairest of all ! ”

And the Voice answered :

“ Thou hast well spoken. And as the cycle of the world’s growth passes from age to age, from golden

PROLOGUE.

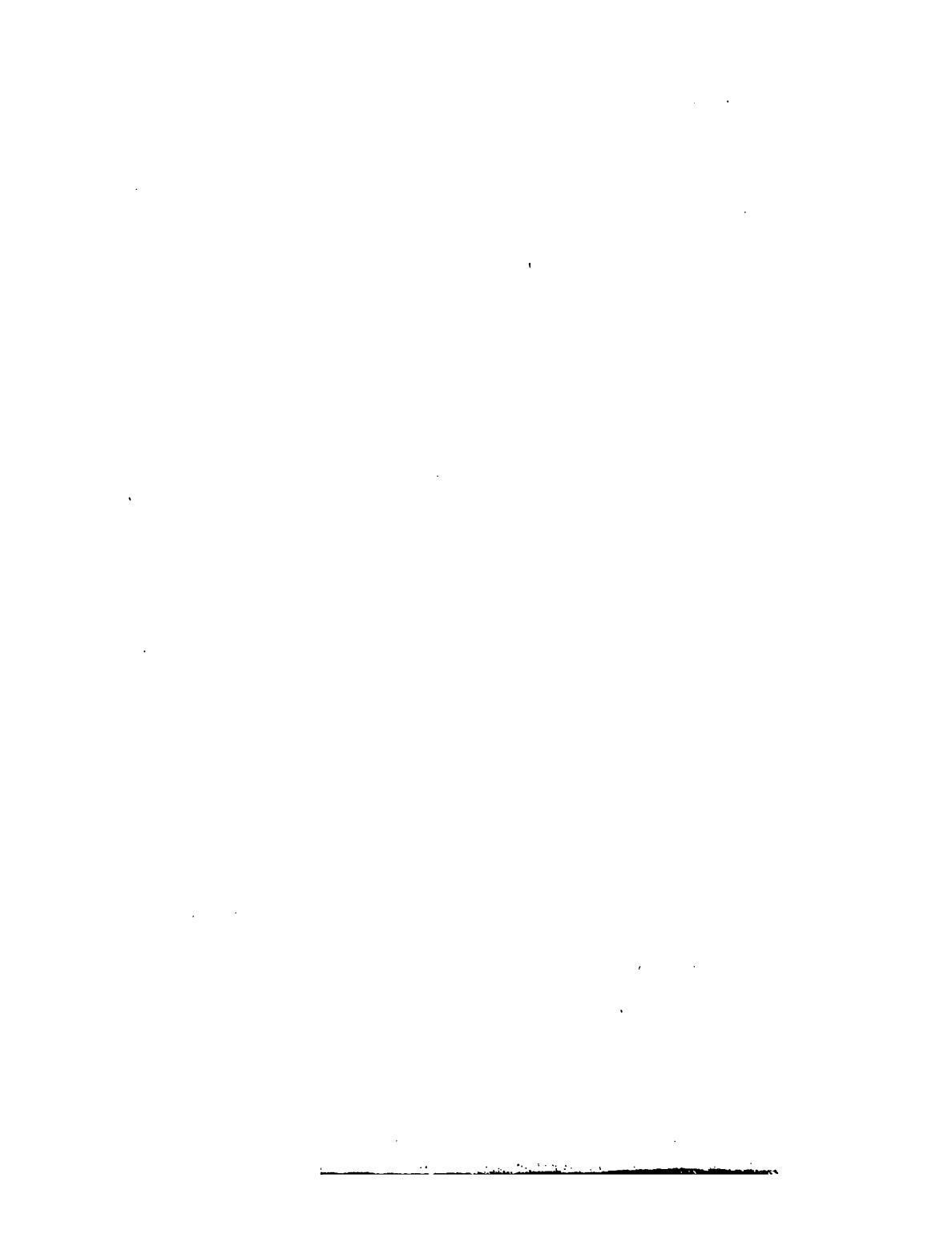
adolescence unto sadder maturity, and is oftentimes perfected through pain—even so is it with the individual life. For all mortality doth hold the elements of the immortal, and there is neither death nor severance in aught that breathes of the divine. Go hence, O child of man, and speak these words unto the nations!"

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

GERALD ST. OLAVE -	-	<i>Young Author</i>
SIR RUPERT ST. OLAVE	{	<i>Squire of St. Olave Court, and Father of Gerald.</i>
LADY CLARICE ST. OLAVE	-	<i>Mother of Gerald.</i>
LIONEL ST. OLAVE	-	<i>Eldest Son of Sir Rupert.</i>
LADY ST. OLAVE -	-	<i>Mother of Sir Rupert.</i>
ENID ST. OLAVE }	-	<i>Sisters of Gerald.</i>
MURIEL ST. OLAVE }	-	
MR. NEWTON	-	<i>An Eminent Publisher.</i>
LESLIE BUCKSTONE.	-	<i>A well-known Reviewer.</i>
RAPHAËL CORNARI	-	<i>A Greek Artist.</i>
GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS	-	<i>A Journalist.</i>
TERENCE LIGHTFOOT	-	<i>A Journalist.</i>
VIVIAN LEE	-	<i>A Minor Poet.</i>
LORD KINGSCLERE	-	<i>Son of the Duke of Glastonbury.</i>
IRENE BEAUCHAMP	-	<i>Daughter of Lord Amersham.</i>
LADY SNOWDON	-	<i>A beautiful Creole.</i>
GEORGE CARRUTHERS	-	<i>An Australian Millionaire.</i>
ZIZI ZANONI	-	<i>A Dancer.</i>
BERKELEY WENTWORTH	-	<i>A Country Gentleman.</i>
MACDOUGALL }	-	<i>Two Old Servants.</i>
MRS. WESTLAKE }	-	

ACT I.

“A CROWN OF RED ROSES.”



A DRAMA IN DREGS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SCENE. *London. Time: fin de siècle.*

MR. NEWTON'S *Office.*

PRESENT:

MR. NEWTON, *Eminent Publisher.*

[Enter GERALD ST. OLAVE. *A tall fair youth, with clear blue eyes, a shapely head, a frame supple rather than stalwart, and a delicate red-and-white skin beneath which the colour fades and flushes with an almost feminine swiftness.*]

MR. NEWTON: [rising, bland, elderly and sleek.] Good morning. Mr. — er — St. Olave. You have called, I presume, with reference to your manuscript?

GERALD: [diffidently.] Yes, Mr. Newton, I called in person. I hope that it is not unusual?—that I am in no way inconveniencing you?

MR. NEWTON: Not at all—not at all. Happy to see

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you. Pray be seated—we had better [*taking manuscript from bureau*] get to business at once.

GERALD : If you please.

MR. NEWTON : [*continuing affably.*] Our readers have gone carefully through it, and I myself have read your work with attention, and I admit that it appears to me to show marked capability. The story is admirably conceived. The descriptions of Nature are quite idyllic. I also observe here and there, that mastery of classical culture which the great Lord Lytton held to be so essential to the purest literary art.

[GERALD : [*enthusiastically, his blue eyes sparkling.*] Mr. Newton you are too kind, such praise as yours—

MR. NEWTON : [*interposing.*] One moment, my friend. I have given your work no more praise than it merits, but—alas ! that in life there should always be a *but*—I fear I must with regret, with *infinite* regret, inform you that the marketable value (as we say in the trade) of your work would be *nil*.

GERALD : [*mournfully.*] This is very bad news. [*feverishly taking up manuscript.*] Possibly there is something I could alter? At Oxford and at home I devoted a great deal of my time to the study of composition, construction, logic. But perhaps that was not sufficient?

MR. NEWTON : [*smiling ironically.*] Composition, construction, logic! A study of the man in the moon would equally help you to get into touch with the modern public. Why even grammar has gone out.

A DRAMA IN DREGS.

No, there is no fault from a *literary* point of view that I would bring against your work.

GERALD: [*timidly.*] What then is its chief fault?

MR. NEWTON: [*drily.*] Its whole tone is wrong.

GERALD: [*flushing and speaking rather stiffly.*] I regret to hear you say that. My own sisters were suffered to read it.

MR. NEWTON: Yes—that's just the trouble.

GERALD: [*coldly.*] I fail to understand your meaning.

MR. NEWTON: [*blandly.*] Oh, no offence intended. Of course I merely meant that your sisters, like other young ladies living in the country (and admirably brought up as I feel certain), would exactly represent in their literary preferences the very opposite to what would be generally popular amongst the London public. You understand?

GERALD: Not quite, I'm afraid.

MR. NEWTON: [*rather impatiently.*] Well the public of to-day—even the “young lady” public of Smith and of Mudie—likes “realism.” The morbid, the abnormal, or as some even say the diseased, have “caught on” just now. Messrs. Haste and Hurry over in Paternoster Row are bringing out the *Notes of a Neurotic* this month and expect a big boom. Certain publishers who have temporarily taken the “romanticists” in hand, strive to convince the world that these latter have effected a sort of literary “swing of the pendulum,” and that romance is about to oust realism.

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But we, in the trade, go by *financial* results. During the last few years it is indisputable that the realists, alike singly and collectively, have had all the biggest sales. The public is always ready to pay for what it likes; and the very same people who most loudly deplore the circulation of certain "up-to-date" literature, privately purchase these same books with the greatest eagerness; and I believe that were an English Zola to appear upon the scenes, he would make his own fortune in a few years, and also that of his publishers. We are, as you will understand, compelled to regard all these matters from a purely commercial standpoint. And, therefore, we are often forced—as in the present case—to decline really excellent literature because unhappily it is not just now saleable.

GERALD: [*rising mournfully.*] I must not monopolise any more of your time, Mr. Newton. Good morning.

MR. NEWTON: [*blandly.*] I fear you are greatly disappointed, Mr. St. Olave?

GERALD: [*manfully.*] Well, I must try and make the best of it. I put the best I had, alike of brain, of heart and of ideals, into that book, because I thought perhaps it might do some good in the world. But since the public will have none of it—well, there's an end of the matter.

MR. NEWTON: [*following him to the door and speaking meditatively.*] It almost seems a pity that talent as undeniable as yours should be lost to the world. Why not make another bid for fame?

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GERALD : [linger^{ing}.] Of course I should like to succeed—anyone would, still—

MR. NEWTON : [impressively.] Shall I tell you what you lack ?

GERALD : [eagerly.] If you would be so kind.

MR. NEWTON : Well, your chief lack is—a complete absence of any knowledge of life.

GERALD : Of life ?

MR. NEWTON : Yes, you need to live. To gain experience.

GERALD : Where ?

MR. NEWTON : [rather irritably.] Why ask me ? Am I not a respectable Philistine, who drives out each evening to Hampstead to join a wife and daughters, to play a rubber of whist, and to go to bed at eleven ? No, I only publish realistic books, I do not write them. But you—if you wish to write popular books—you must live, not dreaming of classical ideals in some University quadrangle; but amidst the actual flesh-and-blood surroundings of a modern city. You must study men and women—the “sex-problem” and all the rest of it. You must study above all in the atmosphere of the men and women who have lived.

GERALD : This is your advice, Mr. Newton ?

MR. NEWTON : [slightly shrugging his shoulders.] I never presume to give advice. You asked me what type of literature is the most popular, and I have stated my views—the views of any man in our profession who is aware how the “realists” have at present “cap-

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tured" the book-market. I regret to find myself unable to make any offer for your really admirable work. But should you at any future time produce any fiction which would be more in our line, I shall hope that our firm may be associated with it. Good morning.

[GERALD takes his leave and passes slowly and with a downcast air towards his Chambers near the Temple. As he is passing along the Embankment, he recognises a familiar face over the way and mutters to himself:] "Hullo! there's that young Greek, Raphaël Cornari. Have not seen him since Oxford. Shall I speak to him? No, I think not. I always thought him a beastly little cad in those days, and he doesn't look much improved. How the brute's over-dressed, too! He never could look like a gentleman. Confound it! here he is crossing over!"

[RAPHAËL CORNARI, a young Greek. Age about eight and twenty, but looks nearer forty. Dark-skinned, and not ill-featured, but with black sharp eyes set too close together, and a heavy jaw.]

RAPHAËL: [speaking volubly and with great apparent heartiness.] How are you, St. Olave? Not seen you for an age, positively not since Oxford, I think? Well, there's no place like London for coming across one's friends. I've been travelling in the East, and also studying in Paris a good deal since I left Oxford. And you—what have you been doing with yourself?

GERALD: I have been studying for the Bar.

RAPHAËL: Humph! rather dry work, isn't it? I couldn't stand the "Law" myself, unless, indeed, I

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were Sir Francis Jeune, then [*chuckling*] one might see a few good things.

GERALD: [*laughing*.] I am afraid I am a long way from Sir Francis Jeune's eminence. I have only been at it a few months.

RAPHAËL: [*lighting a cigar*.] Very monotonous work, isn't it?

GERALD: Well, I can't candidly say that it is particularly exhilarating. Still "beggars musn't be choosers," you know, and I want to stick to the work.

RAPHAËL: Well. I wish you good luck. I see you are stopping here. Are these your rooms?

GERALD: [*civilly*.] Yes. Will you come in?

RAPHAËL: Thanks, delighted.

[*They enter together. RAPHAËL remains some time smoking. Presently, passing towards the door, observes GERALD'S manuscript lying on the table.*]

RAPHAËL: [*glancing at it rather curiously*.] What's this?

GERALD: [*curtly*.] Oh, just some papers of mine.

RAPHAËL: [*still inquisitively*.] A manuscript? Upon my soul, I believe you've been writing a novel?

GERALD: [*abruptly*.] Will you have a drink?

RAPHAËL: Thanks. But about this romance?

GERALD: [*rather wearily*.] Well, what about it?

RAPHAËL: Is it going to be published?

GERALD: [*ironically*.] No, the public will be spared that.

RAPHAËL: [*still lingering*.] I am deeply interested

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in your romance. I feel certain that—like yourself—it must be so beautifully guileless. Do you remember how at Oxford we used to call you “the Seraph,” because you were so fresh?

GERALD: [*with some annoyance.*] People are always given idiotic names at Oxford.

RAPHAËL: But yours was most appropriate. I assure you my virgin aunt who espied you once in the quadrangle burned to know you. She said you looked quite seraphic; and that she hoped I saw a great deal of you.

GERALD: [*much incensed.*] Very kind of her, I'm sure.

RAPHAËL: And the book—is it seraphic?

GERALD: [*with some bitterness.*] So the publisher inferred when he declined it.

RAPHAËL: Ah! *Voilà le mot de l'éénigme!* So you *have* written a romance. You *have* made it good. And the publisher *has* thought it too good.

GERALD: [*After a long pause, speaking at last impulsively.*] I say, Cornari, you have “lived” as the saying is, a good deal, and you know the world. Tell me, do you think it is needful to—er—have examined all the most “realistic” phases of life, in order to write a popular novel?

RAPHAËL: [*deliberately.*] Most certainly it is needful. *Mon cher*, the age, as my friends of the Quartier Latin say, is fatigued. It has need of fresh sensations, fresh vices—if indeed any vice under the sun can be called

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fresh. To the artist it says, "Paint us the body naked." To the author it says, "Paint us the soul naked." To both it says, "Initiate us into all the mysteries of strange sins, and scarlet temptations, so only shall we in requital, give you fame!"

GERALD: [meditatively.] That is what Mr. Newton said, though he put it less artistically.

RAPHAËL: Precisely. He knows his public. And he knows his age.

GERALD: But there are ideals—national ideals, individual ideals. There is self-respect, honour, heroism. Are these things not beautiful for the painter to portray, for the author to depict?

RAPHAËL: The things you speak of are relics, antiquities, merely significant as survivals of a past age. At present—

GERALD: At present—what?

RAPHAËL: [laughing ironically.] At present the world is one great, strange, wonderful madhouse. It has hailed corruption as beautiful, it has seen a fairness in decay! Our cry, that of *nous autres*, who live, is *Vive la joie*, and *Vive l'animalism!* St. Olave, you have possibly heard that my pictures sell?

GERALD: Yes, I have heard large sums quoted as their price.

RAPHAËL: And you know why?

GERALD: I suppose because they have artistic merit.

RAPHAËL: [laughing curtly.] *Mon cher*, you are quite wrong there. They make their biggest prices

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because they are "realistic." [A pause, RAPHAËL puffs awhile meditatively at his cigar, then speaks slowly.] I have always liked you, St. Olave, though I am under the impression that you have always loathed me. No, pray do not dissent. I bear you no malice. I should like to see you successful. Let me show you the road to fame. Some artists of the "newest" school are coming to dine with me to-night. Will you join us, and like the Slavonic heroine of Sar Péladan's work, become initiated into *les neuf cercles des mœurs fin de siècle*?

GERALD: [after a moment's hesitation.] Very many thanks. Yes I shall be glad to come.

RAPHAËL: [passing out.] Au revoir! To-night then at my Studio, D— Street, Chelsea, 8.15.

[Exit RAPHAËL.

GERALD: [walks across to the mantelpiece and gazes dreamily at several photographs. One represents a beautiful old Elizabethan house, underneath which is written St. Olave Court. The other a group of boys and girls with fair curly hair, very like GERALD's own. But the portrait which the lad gazes at longest is that of a woman, no longer in early youth, but with an exquisitely chiselled face, and with eyes serious yet serene, which look as though they had known renunciations, but held likewise the capacity for infinite sympathy. GERALD murmuring to himself.] Mother—dear Mother, for all their sakes, but most of all for yours, I must make money. You have known so long—too long—how hard it is to be poor—poor with

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the poverty from which much is expected ! Is there, I wonder, any poverty more bitter than that ? And the Court—the dear old Court—must not, *shall* not, be sold ! It would break your heart. Yes, I must make money. And if it is to be made soonest in—this way—why not ? [For a moment he is silent, seeming to muse deeply, then strolling to the window, leans his fair head on his hands, and glances at the busy street below with a little shiver of dis-taste.] How sordid [he mutters impatiently], how squalid, are all these crowds of hurrying money-seekers ! How coarse, how animal the universal human type. Or is it that I am something of a Sybarite, an epicurean ? The life of cities is the life of competition. The classic culture of more cloistered days finds but scant favour in the modern marts. Doubtless Coñari is right. The artist is never in touch with his age until he understands it. And he can gain this comprehension only—through experience.

SCENE II.

SCENE. MR. NEWTON's office several months later. MR. NEWTON, who has a manuscript before him, presently rings, and requests that his JUNIOR PARTNER be so good as to join him.

MR. NEWTON : I have been sent another work from young St. Olave.

JUN. PARTNER : What, that guileless-looking youth who appeared here last winter ?

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MR. NEWTON: Guileless—umph! Seems pretty well to have sloughed *that* skin. Will you look over what he has just sent me?

JUN. PARTNER: [glances at the title and reads.] A DRAMA IN DREGS. Seems to be a sort of history of a decadent artist's career. [Reads aloud.] “He loved to hang the purple pall of night with crimson draperies. [*sotto voce*, “Humph! ‘painting the town red,’ I presume!”] he loved to dream aloud, to utter his glittering prose-fancies to the lovely, soulless beings all around him. At times, when the mood was upon him, he would glide through the blue Ægean waters towards those fair and sunlit isles, where Sappho sung, where Hyacinthus wept, and sweet Narcissus died of his own imaged loveliness. The flame-coloured shafts of the clear Eastern dawn, would find him bending o'er the vine-decked, rose-wreathed boards of those whom Aphrodite, uprising from her foamless waves might have embraced as her own chosen worshippers. . . . His picture of Dionysius, with its strange, haunting fairness, and its marvellous pagan gladness, grew brilliant and wonderful beneath the sapphire glow of those Hellenic skies. The olive, and the ilex groves, through which he wandered light of foot, the ivory-coloured morn, the crimson eve, the notes of nightingale, the fleeting tenderness of rose-red lips—the imaged fairness of these things lived in his work and made it subtly fair. The centuries of passion and of beauty-worship, which these wonderful Greek

A DRAMA IN DREGS.

isles had known, and which hung like a heavy perfume in the air, stole sweetly through his veins, and made him feel at one with that lustrous, golden Olympian age which had illumined the great Eastern world, o'er ever the sombre chill of Western morality had come to freeze the leaping life-blood of the enchanted love-children of the sun ! "

MR. NEWTON: It is not nearly so well written as his other work. It is full of that over-elaboration of style; that superabundance of imagery, and confusion of metaphor, which all the decadents affect. However, one thing is certain—it is pre-eminently modern.

JUN. PARTNER: [laughing.] Modern! Well, upon my soul, I don't see how it could well be more modern, or what one may call highly-seasoned. Though the seasoning, of course, is classic, and that is *du dernier chic* in that school, I believe.

MR. NEWTON: [enthusiastically.] Yes, that's just what occurred to me. The boy evidently knows his classics—and he's scattered them about in just that sort of careless, haphazard fashion the public likes. It makes people feel that it's really quite creditable to read an improper novel, when at every other moment they come upon some classical allusion. Pagan, diseased, exotic—and all the rest of it. Well, it's safe to sell like wildfire for a time in this "most Christian" country! And look here [lowering his voice mysteriously] I hear that Messrs. Haste and Hurry have made a tremendous boom with their "Unlocked Series." Let us

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bring out this book—and if it has a good run we'll follow it up with a "Scarlet Series," or something in that way. What do you say?

JUN. PARTNER: [meditatively.] The book's good for a six months' run. That will see us through. Yes, certainly I would recommend its being brought out as soon as possible.

[A short time later enter GERALD ST. OLAVE looking rather jaded.]

MR. NEWTON: Delighted to see you, Mr. St. Olave. I have just been examining your most interesting manuscript. It is very subtle, very daring. If well brought out it should prove a certain success.

GERALD: [rather languidly re-arranging the flower in his coat.] Ah, well! You see I took your advice. I have seen life. And I have written about its sensations.

MR. NEWTON: [pensively.] Ah, yes, and seeing life is expensive. Perhaps you would prefer money down? That would mean (exchanging a glance with his Junior Partner) that we should offer you a certain sum for the purchase of your copyright. That you should receive a—er royalty on each copy sold, and that at the end of the year fresh terms should be settled by us should we arrange to re-issue the work.

JUN. PARTNER: [gravely.] That seems to me a very equitable arrangement. What do you think, Mr. St. Olave?

GERALD: [vaguely.] Oh, I suppose it is all right.
MR. NEWTON: [impressively.] We are always

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pleased to be able to offer favourable terms to young authors.

[*After a little further discussion the contract is drawn up and signed, and Mr. NEWTON hands GERALD a cheque.*]

MR. NEWTON: [rubbing his hands and smiling blandly.] Your hero, Mr. St. Olave, is a very modern young man.

GERALD: An exquisite egoist, is he not? There is nothing in life so perfect as pure egoism. Common-place people say such foolish things about altruism. That is because they do not understand that true egoism is a fine art. It does not belong to the multitude. It never has.

MR. NEWTON: Ah! I see you hold all the most modern views. Max Nordau might grant you a page to yourself.

GERALD: Max Nordau! Is that the impossible German whose sausages went to his head to the extent of making him seriously believe Tennyson to have been a great poet?

MR. NEWTON: The same. You should forward him an early copy of your DRAMA IN DREGS. Really you have left Zola far behind.

GERALD: Zola. Ah! but then he is so crude! And the time is prophesied when he will be relegated exclusively to the "young ladies'" boarding schools. Good morning, Mr. Newton. [Exit GERALD.

MR. NEWTON: [to himself.] It's a disgraceful book, but it is safe to sell. And business is business. [to his sixteen year old daughter, who has just entered.] Ah,

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Nellie, here you are, come to rout out your old father and sweep him off to the Exhibition, I suppose?

NELLIE : The others are waiting for you downstairs. We sent up several messages, but I thought it would be quicker to come up myself, and more fun. You know, Daddy, I've never been *inside* your office before. How dingy it is, and there don't seem any nice books about, chiefly dull old ledgers. Ah! no—here [*laying her hand on a dainty manuscript*]—here is something that looks interesting, A DRAMA IN DREGS. Is it a novel? Do [*coaxingly*] do let me take it home?

MR. NEWTON ; [*hurriedly.*] Put it down at once, Nell. It is not at all a fit book for you. You have plenty of Edna Lyall's and—er—Miss Yonge's works at home. And they are the right books for you to read.

NELLIE : [*laughing.*] How dreadfully particular you always are, Daddy. However, come along, We'll have a splendid time, won't we? I'm sure you've never seen anything like the Big Wheel.

[*Exit together.*

SCENE III.

SCENE. *Hyacinth Club. Hour, midnight.*

PRESENT :

LESLIE BUCKSTONE, generally called "Buckles," a well-known journalist and reviewer.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS, the Editor of a popular "Daily"; Radical by creed; Conservative by choice; and Opportunist by habit.

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TERENCE LIGHTFOOT, *a genial Irishman, with more ready wit than ready money.*

VIVIAN LEE, *a poet, who has become famous owing to the publication of a volume of Rossetti-like sonnets, and the possession of an unlimited amount of audacity, and back-hair.*

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [plaintively.] Play going's devilish thirsty work !

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: You're always thirsty, Terry, you're like the man in Gerald St. Olave's book, who said—

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Gerald St. Olave ? Can that be the man I used to know at Oxford ? Not half a bad sort, but so fresh, and red-and-white, they used to call him "the Seraph."

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: St. Olave called "the Seraph." Well, upon my soul !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Well—what?

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS; Haven't you read A DRAMA IN DREGS, Buckles ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [yawning.] Only just back from abroad. Moreover, never read books—merely review them.

VIVIAN LEE: [ironically.] And slate them !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [still yawning.] If not—why not ? What is there to read now-a-days ? A few wails on the eternal "woman question" by illiterate "Lady-Authors"—a few platitudes on hand-made Dutch-paper by amateur reformers. But about young St. Olave—tell me what his book is like ?

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VIVIAN LEE: Well, your *confrères* all say it's immoral.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Deuced good-natured of them —will treble its circulation. Always say myself when a friend brings out a book, that no decent woman should have it in her house. That makes all the dowagers, and all the débutantes buy it on the sly!

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: In this case it is true. Book's never coarse, but it's full of what someone has called "the subtle art of indecency." By the way did you see that paragraph in one of to-night's papers called "The Countess, the Cocotte—and another."

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Never read papers—only write 'em—quite trouble enough.

VIVIAN LEE: Well the "other" in this case is Gerald St. Olave. You know they say Zizi Zanoni cannoned deliberately into Lady Snowdon out bicycling the other day and nearly smashed her up. Awful affair! Police had to interfere I'm told.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Women are growing so muscular now-a-days, we shall have soon to grant them the suffrage in sheer self-defence!

VIVIAN LEE: Last evening it fell to my lot [*with a slight shudder*] to take an Advanced Woman into dinner. The party was at Lady Lionchase's. You know [*parenthetically*] how wretchedly she "sorts" her people? Well, there I was—during eight whole courses, with this abomination in a crude gown, and with a rasping voice at my elbow.

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GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: Evil sometimes becomes our good. You might have turned her into "copy."

VIVIAN LEE: Copy! Ah! that's all you editors think about. But for a poet [*pauses with an expression of unmitigated disgust*].

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*jovially*.] Cheer up, old man! You know your houri can't get at you here. You're quite safe with us.

VIVIAN LEE: [*gloomily*.] How long we shall continue to be safe—even at our Clubs—seems to me problematical.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*glancing musingly at the poet who is somewhat chétif*.] Some men are pre-destined to become the victims of houris. It is Kismet—fate. But being a poet, you really ought not to object so much. [*helps himself to some more whiskey, murmuring blandly* :]

"So he pulled out his little cruiskeen,
And drank to his pretty colleen!"

VIVIAN LEE: [*indignantly*.] "Pretty colleen" indeed! Why this Pythoness was six foot high, and as muscular as a Grenadier.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: Charmed therefore with a pocket Apollo—always the way. I daresay now she would have liked to have taken you home with her.

VIVIAN LEE. [*rather fatuously*.] Oh! no doubt!

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*continuing sympathetically*.] There is something so exquisite in contrasts. Doubtless-

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this bronzed and muscular Amazon regarded you as an enchanting *ingenu*. Illusioned by your youthful aspect she of course imagined you delightfully malleable. A child to train up as a docile "coming man." Vivian, such an opportunity would have been the very thing for you. I picture it all in fancy's fairy gaze. The actual essence of the great Woman question unfolded daily before your awakening mind. The pleasant "lecturettes" on the pre-historic man's iniquities; the happy half-holidays spent at the South Kensington Museum. Like a female Solomon she would have brought you up in the way you should go, and had you swerved by a hair's breadth from the straight and narrow path, no doubt would have done her duty as a mother by you unflinchingly.

VIVIAN LEE : What rubbish you do talk, Terence !

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS : Almost as bad as the Advanced Women themselves !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Why, Moorfields, I thought you were all for women's emancipation and so on. You're always thrusting it down our throats in your "Leaders."

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS : Oh, all that humbug goes down now-a-days. The "boom" in women is far from over.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT : [expansively.] Well "rights" or no rights, I'm all for the colleens—bless their little hearts ! Pass me the cigars, Buckles !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [meditatively.] Well, what all

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these advanced women exactly want is what I never can make out.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: I'll tell you the very latest programme of the Lady Pythonesses, Buckles!

"They're going to send a wire to the moon, to the moon.
And they'll set the Thames on fire very soon, very soon,
They've a preconcerted notion, that they'll cross the Polar
Ocean.
And they'll find perpetual motion, if they can, if they can!"

And if they can't—why they'll hold a pleasant little drawing-room meeting, and vote our friend Vivian Lee into the chair!

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: [*contemptuously*.] These women want everything, and nothing. They scream for the moon, whilst they possess no fixed programme for even the slightest social illumination. They are a pack of discontented unsexed viragoes.

"Who compound for sins that they're inclined to,
By damning those that they've no mind to!"

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*fervently*.] May all the holy saints preserve us from our friends.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: [*laughing*.] Oh, you mean, I suppose, that I write them up, and talk them down? Well, if I do, I'm only in the same boat as most of our "leading politicians." Liberals and Conservatives alike, have granted women a splendid constitution in the air.* But when it comes to actual practice then each party—knows better!

* This was written prior to February 3rd, 1897, when a parliamentary majority of 71 voted in favour of a second reading of the Woman's Suffrage Bill.

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TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: Well, I'm not much of a politician myself. But the devil's in it, if I wouldn't try and kick out any government which made me pay my taxes whilst it refused me a vote!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*thoughtfully.*] If women had a vote I wonder what they'd do with it?

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: An infinity of mischief. At different times women have come to the fore and helped to lead a popular cry. In '83 there was a notable example of this, when a lot of old women of both sexes, came forward, and on so-called "moral grounds" managed to magnify and multiply the very evil they avowedly were trying to suppress.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*reflectively.*] If there be a higher law than expediency, women, it seems to me, were justified in the outcry they then made. If, on the other hand, expediency be the sole standard of morality, then they were unquestionably wrong.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: I detest Advanced Women for my part. Still, there is something in what Terence says. Women, as a whole, do try to reach out after a high moral law. Call it sentimentalism or idealism, or what you will, the fact remains.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: [*slightly shrugging his shoulders.*] The law of expediency is the only workable law in most civilised communities. Moreover, if you call woman the higher moral being, you must narrow down morality to mere sexual chastity. Women are not more true, more generous, or more honourable than

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men ; whilst a sense of abstract justice seems to be a peculiarly masculine attribute. From A, to Z, the alphabet of women's morality is chiefly sexual, with a certain admixture of that "theology tinged with emotionalism," which Herbert Spencer has said is often called religion. The priests in the first instance forced their morality on women ; and they in their turn now wish to force it upon men.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: And no bad thing from various standpoints if they succeeded.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: My good fellow, you belong to the Celtic races. Naturally your sympathies are with women.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT : [quickly] Yes, man has crushed woman as brutally as the Saxon has crushed the Celt. The revolt of each is natural, inevitable even.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS : [drily.] The parallel is exact in more ways than one.

VIVIAN LEE : [languidly] It is all very well for a nation to demand freedom and political privileges and so forth. But the whole duty of a woman is to be beautiful.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: But they cannot all be beautiful. Nature did not intend it. Think of your Pythoness, for example. She may be as useful in her own sphere (Advanced Women talk a great deal about "spheres," I'm told) as Lady Snowdon or Zizi Zazoni in theirs.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: By the way, was the story actually true? Did Zizi Zazoni really insult Lady

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Snowdon publicly because of her friendship with young St. Olave?

VIVIAN LEE: Story's absolutely true. Shocking bad form of Lady Snowdon to make such a row. These Americans are like that. Paris gowns and barmaid manners always! Moreover, they are always striving to be famous, and succeeding in being—infamous! As to St. Olave, I don't believe he cares a straw for either of them. He leads a queer sort of life, I'm told. Never goes to bed till four in the morning, or gets up till four in the afternoon. People say, too, that he's killing himself with opium—drugs himself with it down in the very lowest of the riverside dens, and—

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*interposing.*] Still, when all is said and done, Gerald St. Olave is his own enemy far more than anyone else's. Besides, he's very young. And he's been awfully "run after," I've always heard.

VIVIAN LEE: [*curtly.*] Can't say, I'm sure. Everyone says he's going straight to the dogs.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*meditatively.*] Is he? Well, that does seem odd when one remembers what he was like at Oxford and at home.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: At home?—you know his people then?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Only slightly. They put me up for a night once when I was down in Devonshire.

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*laughing.*] Thought you never stirred off a pavement, Buckles. Why did you

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go down to Devonshire? You must have felt like Robinson Crusoe, or Stanley in Africa.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Well, I'm not very enthusiastic about the country, on the whole. Never seems to me you can get much there, except "local" butter (and people say most of that's made in Denmark). However, on this occasion—it was about a year ago—a man prevailed on me to go on a bicycling tour with him. I don't to this day know *why* I went—but I did. We meant to go through North Devon, and were to meet on a certain day at Brendon, a little village on Exmoor. Well, the day arrived, and so did I. But the man I was going with, sent a wire at the last moment to say that he was detained, and would join me at the next stopping-place. So the following day I started alone. By some bad luck, however, my machine collapsed just about the middle of one of the steep moor-roads between Glenthorne and Dunster, and to make things worse, a bad hill-fog came on ; and there I was, cast up high and dry on a desolate moor cursing my luck, and wondering how the deuce I was to make my way to the nearest inn, when suddenly a trap drove by. The man driving it stopped, seeing my plight, and asked whether he could do anything for me. When he spoke, I recognised young St. Olave, and asked him to direct me to the nearest inn. But he wouldn't hear of this—said his home was quite close, and insisted on hoisting my machine and myself into the cart and driving me on to the Court —where his people certainly proved most hospitable.

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GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS : It's a beautiful place, isn't it ? But I've heard they are very hard up. Heavily mortgaged property, is it not ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : *[laughing.]* It's extraordinary, Moorfields, how you always know the ins and outs of everyone's affairs. Yes, I believe they're not at all well off. But the place is beautiful. Old Elizabethan house with ivy and gables, and big cedar and ilex trees and a "rose plaisirance," such as one reads of in old novels. Altogether, too, they are rather a picturesque family. Sir Rupert is just one's idea of an old-fashioned country "squire" and as straight as a die. Lady Clarice, whom they all adore, is delightful ; looks as though she had just stepped out of a Greuze painting in order to become châtelaine of the Court. There is something very charming about that type of womanhood, more especially in these days, when there are so many women—and so few ladies ! The eldest son, Lionel, is quite crippled now ; he had a nasty fall out hunting a short time back, and they're afraid his spine is injured. He was once a tremendous athlete. Was captain of the Eton Eleven, and rowed stroke one year in the Oxford eight. Regular out-of-door chap, you know. Must feel it awfully being laid on the shelf. However, he makes no fuss about it, full of pluck. Then there are two St. Olave girls, eldest is good-looking, very like Lady Clarice—Lady Clarice was a Stagholtme, you know.

VIVIAN LEE : *[with awakening interest.]* All the

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Stagholme women are good-looking. I really should not mind investigating the Seraph's sister; she might prove of some interest.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Humph, "the white doe of Rhylstone" plunged into the vivisector's trough would be about a meet analogy. No, my good Vivian, you had better keep to your "pearl-limbed Phrynes" and your "red-lipped Circes," and leave white maidenhood alone.

VIVIAN LEE: [*after a moment's pause.*] If the Seraph's people are as delightful as you assure us, it is to be feared that he does not do them any special credit. However, he's in with a very bad lot, and that probably accounts for it. You see he's always about with Zizi Zanoni and with that Greek artist Raphaël Cornari who is, they say, either her confederate or her lover.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: Or both!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Well, I had thought of going to look up young St. Olave. But I don't want to be mixed up with that blackguard Raphaël Cornari or any of his crew. I'm not particular [*general merriment*], and I don't seem to run to the copy-book virtues——

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: Surely you are too modest?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*firmly.*] No. I'm not proud. I don't say I could give points to St. Anthony, or any of that lot, still——

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: [*interposing.*] Buckles, you know you were born to carry a banner with the Band of Hope.

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*plaintively.*] You chaps will never let me finish a sentence. I was only going to say that I don't go in for being better than my neighbours. But one must draw the line somewhere. And I *do* draw it at Raphaël Cornari.

VIVIAN LEE: I suppose he's about the most brilliant artist, and the most consummate scoundrel the age has yet produced. Interesting, however, as a study of the intellectual-artistic fungi evolved by our *fin de siècle*.

GRANVILLE MOORFIELDS: [*pensively.*] I suppose it would be libellous to make any direct assertion. But that ugly affair in the city (although he made a lot of "bluff" about it) never seemed to have been very satisfactorily cleared up?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*shrewdly.*] And it's my belief it never will be. However, that's neither here nor there. Waiter, bring some whisky and soda, and some more cigars.

[*A little later, when the supper party has broken up, LESLIE BUCKSTONE whilst returning home is overtaken by TERENCE LIGHTFOOT.*]

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: Wait a moment, Buckles. I've something to say to you. [LESLIE BUCKSTONE pauses.] You said something this evening about going to look up young St. Olave?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Yes, but I've given up the notion. You heard what the others said?

TERENCE LIGHTFOOT: Yes. Moorfields and Lee are awfully down on him. But I wouldn't pay much re-

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gard to what they say. I know Gerald St. Olave and although [*regretfully*] it is a pity he is so much under the influence of that brute Cornari, he is really a good sort. A little while back one of my brothers, who is also a journalist, got into an awful scrape with the editor he worked for. He's quite a young chap, very raw and new to the work. He, knowing no better, poor lad, let his pen run away with him—it wasn't noticed at the time, and the article went to press with the rest. Before twenty-four hours had passed however, the editor received a lawyer's letter, and it was "touch and go" if there wouldn't be a libel case. The matter was ultimately squared by an abject editorial apology and lots of mud-eating. But the editor (not unnaturally) was furious with my brother and turned him out neck and crop. This was an awful blow to the youngster, for his work meant bread and butter to him. He came to me, but I couldn't do much for him. As you know, I'm usually up a tree myself in the way of money. But suddenly I bethought me of Gerald St. Olave, whom I knew slightly, and who was an occasional contributor to the paper, and whose articles were much sought after by the editor. I didn't know if he'd exert himself on behalf of a stranger, but I told him all about poor Jock's scrape, and he was awfully good-natured about it, went off there and then to see the editor, pleaded for Jock, threatened even to send his own articles elsewhere, and finally, partly through coërcion, and partly through

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persuasion, succeeded in getting the poor lad reinstated. As to Jock, he always declares young St. Olave's one of the best chaps in the whole world. And really, all things considered, I'm not sure that he's far out. I think our ways part here. Good night.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [to himself as he continues his homeward road.] Well, it's a queer world, take it all round. And I'm hanged, if I don't think I'll go and look up that young St. Olave—after all !

SCENE IV.

SCENE. MR. NEWTON'S office, *several months later.*

[Enter GERALD ST. OLAVE looking rather pale and anxious.]

GERALD: I have come about that other edition, Mr. Newton. I believe the current one is nearly exhausted? And . . . —er, the fact is I am rather short of funds just now, and should be glad of some further remittances.

MR. NEWTON: I am as disappointed as you can be about the matter, Mr. St. Olave. But in point of fact I do not see my way to bringing out any further issue of your work.

GERALD: [anxiously.] But my book should surely run through several more editions?

MR. NEWTON: [shaking his head.] Pardon me—but such works as A DRAMA IN DREGS rarely live longer than a few months. They are read because they are

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well—daring—but directly something equally new and still more daring appears—the libraries shunt them.

GERALD : [slowly.] The book during these last months has had a huge sale; and do you mean, Mr. Newton, that all I—the author—shall realise for it, is the trivial sum you paid me down, and the comparatively small royalties that I have been receiving ?

MR. NEWTON : [blandly.] You have stated the case as it stands, Mr. St. Olave. Although as to the royalties being small, you must permit me there to differ from you.

GERALD : [bitterly.] They were small—and you know it.

MR. NEWTON : They were as stated in the contract.

GERALD : [flushing.] I have been simply robbed. You have made your thousands by the book, whilst I have made a beggarly two or three hundred !

MR. NEWTON : We have kept to the contract—precisely.

GERALD : [indignantly.] I shall re-issue my work immediately through another firm.

MR. NEWTON : [suavely.] Pardon me. But we hold the copyright.

GERALD : [furiously.] You have both robbed, and swindled me !

MR. NEWTON : Sir ! the law——

GERALD : [recklessly.] You may have the letter of the law on your side. Still I repeat—it is iniquitous,

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unjust. You have pocketed your thousands over my work, whilst I——

MR. NEWTON: [shrugging his shoulders.] You sold your copyright.

GERALD: [hotly.] Yes—and the devil made the bargain. Good morning. [Exit abruptly. Walking down the street and muttering to himself.] Great Scot! What a fool I've been. I ought of course to have driven a proper bargain. But I never dreamt what sharks they were, or that my book would only be likely to live a year. A year! and that is what the world now-a-days calls a *literary success*! To be “boomed” for a few months in the press. For publishers to make a big haul, and the poor devil of an author—a pittance! I had counted on a long sale, I thought I should make a fortune. I had thought [with a slight break in his voice] that I should soon be able to help them *so much* at home. And now? And now what can I do? I threw over the law for literature. And now it seems that literature has thrown me over. I meant to make a fortune and this is what it's come to—debts! I counted on a long sale of the book, and went the pace accordingly, and now I suppose I shall have to settle up. I must live somehow until I can finish some more literary work and get a good bargain for it. But—in the meanwhile? On every side I can see only a tangle of difficulties. I'll go back to my chambers and think it all out, and try if I can see daylight through the matter. But, the deuce! There's

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twelve o'clock striking, and I'm due at Raphael Cornari's studio this morning. He's a confounded long while finishing that Lucifer head. But I suppose I must keep the appointment. [*Hastens away in the direction of Chelsea.*]

SCENE V.

SCENE. RAPHAËL CORNARI'S studio.

PRESENT :

RAPHAËL, who is engaged on a large canvas, and a FEMALE MODEL in Greek costume. The model is rather pretty; but pale and delicate looking.

Enter GERALD.

RAPHAËL CORNARI: Good morning, Gerald. I began to fear that you had forgotten our appointment.

GERALD: I'm sorry to be late, but I could not get away before; detained by business.

RAPHAËL: Business. Ah, my friend, you are becoming a capitalist, perhaps?

GERALD: Capitalist! You should rather say pauper

RAPHAËL: [whistles softly; throws down his mahl stick, and turns to the model.] Well, young woman, I think you may—disappear. Also [regarding her rather contemptuously] you need not return to-morrow, you're too lean by half for a Daphne.

THE MODEL: [throwing aside her Greek draperies, pinning on a threadbare shawl, and speaking apologetically.] I'm very sorry, sir, I do my best with sittin', and I suppose bein' lean comes from livin' poor.

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RAPHAËL: Then why in the name of common sense do you—"live poor?"

THE MODEL: [hesitating.] Well, you see there's a lot of us at home—

RAPHAËL: Then more fool you to stay there. A girl with any looks at all can surely find a lover.

THE MODEL: [blushing painfully.] I have a sweet-heart, sir, but he's only a joiner's man, and wages aren't regular enough for us to marry yet.

RAPHAËL: Marry! Who spoke of marrying?

THE MODEL: [in a low tone.] There's only one way, sir, for a woman to live as she should.

RAPHAËL: [shrugging his shoulders.] My dear, with your adaptive sex there are innumerable ways. The woman who does not avail herself of them is in my opinion a fool!

GERALD: [in an undertone.] Look here, Raphaël, that's a vile shame. [Turning with boyish eagerness to THE MODEL.] I say, he's only talking nonsense, don't listen to it, just stick to your own ideas, I'm sure they're quite right. I see you are going away now. Well, good-bye. I'm awfully sorry about the Daphne.

[THE MODEL glances at him gratefully. They shake hands and GERALD contrives to slip a few loose coins into her hands as she is leaving the room. THE MODEL, hurrying down a neighbouring street, overtakes a roughly clad but not ill-looking young workman.]

THE MODEL: I thought, Jim dear, as how this bein' your dinner-hour, mayhap I'd overtake you.

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JIM : You're clear early to-day, Nance, I'm thinkin' ?

NANCY : 'Tis the last sittin' as that 'ere painter chap wants o' me. 'Tis this way, Jim you see. You'll call to mind as how some three weeks gone I 'eard from Jennie Joyce (she as so often sits i' the studios), as 'ow this yer painter wanted som'un young and tall-like for a model, and how 'e took me as seemin' likely ? Well, now it seems as 'ow he don't think me stout enough for his picture, for says he to-day : " Yer too lean by 'alf to make a fittin' Daphner, and so yer ain't no call to come back no more." So yer see—there's nothin' more to be earned that way, and [sighing] with mother's cough getting worse and father's work so uncertain the few shillings will be a sore loss I'm feared !

JIM : [reflectively.] I'm sorry for 'ee, my girl. Still I didn't somehow ever much cotton to the notion o' your sittin' to that painter chap. 'Tis little, I know, as ye can earn with the needle, work hard as ye will, but mayhap it's more seemly work like, for a honest 'oman. I've been country-bred meself, and so have ye, and somehow it *du* seem against the grain like, for to have one's sweetheart afore other men's eyes. Not [hurriedly] as I blames ye, Nance, seein' as 'ow ye but does it to help yer mother and the bairns. Still I don't like th' notion, and that's sure.

NANCY : Jim, I'm not sure as yer not right there. Painter chap—he's a bad lot it's my belief.

JIM : [slowly.] What ha' 'e been doin' to 'ee ?

NANCY : 'Twas what he *said*, Jim, and the manner o'

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him as riled me. For when he complains as 'ow I wer too lean for his likes, I tells 'im as 'ow most like it just come fra' living pore. And then he sneers crool. For, says he, a wench 'as as any looks an' lives pore is sure-ly a fool.

JIM: [sullenly.] 'E said that, did 'e? Well, what *I* says is—damn 'im. I'd like to give 'im what for, I would. But 'tis allus the way o' them swells—curse 'em! They thinks as a pore man's wimmin folks ain't made for nothin' save to be flouted or got into trouble by 'em. But let 'em just wait a bit. The swells is up now—but life's just a see-saw as maybe they'll find out afore long. Last Sunday down Friar's Bridge way there was a chap as up'd and gave it 'em 'ot. The swells, says he, is just a pack o' lazy ruffians—down wi' 'em. Let 'em learn those be their real masters as they are a tryin' to grind and crush under foot.

NANCY: [dubiously.] I know as 'ow some folks says that. But I ain't sure as they're right. I don't think the *real* swells is as bad as them 'alf and 'alf lot like that painter chap. Now for instance there was another chap there to-day, he come in just as I was leav-ing, and he [*taking out some half-crowns*] gave me these.

JIM: [roughly.] Why did ye take 'em, Nance? What call 'ad 'e to treat ye like a street wench?

NANCY: [pleadingly.] Jim dear, don't go for to take it amiss. Mother do want the things so crool bad. Doctor says as 'ow she *must* 'a soup and what not, if

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she's ter pull thro'. And the young chap he were so pleasant spoken.

JIM: [*sullenly.*] Wimmin is allus talked over by a smooth tongue. They're sich precious fools. And ye ain't no call to take the swell's money Nancy. Money as ye ain't earned. Curse 'is cheek, 'im treating ye like a drab!

NANCY: [*flushing.*] Jim, ye won't see this matter right. He 'as guv me this money wur as different from the painter chap as chalk is from cheese. And if ye'd been there, ye'd ha' felt a kind o' drawed to 'im, like I wur.

JIM: [*contemptuously.*] 'Taint likely. I ain't ever 'eard no special good o' that painter chap, and birds o' a feather allus flock together.

NANCY: [*with conviction.*] Yer wrong there, Jim. 'E aint a bit like the painter chap. I dunno 'is name. But 'es a gentleman, 'e is. And 'e don't look a bad lot one bit. In fact [*meditatively*] 'e looks sich a bonnie lad—I couldna help wonderin' if 'e'd a mother and may be sisters at 'ome, as mayhap thought all the world o' 'im?

JIM: [*gruffly.*] Stow that, Nance. Yer just a soft-headed ninny like the rest o' the wimmin, and a tongue makes a fool o' ye.

NANCY: [*pleadingly.*] I'm sorry yer vexed Jim. But 'ere we are at the warehus'. Good-bye.

JIM: [*relenting.*] Good-bye for a bit. And [*lingering*] lookee ye're, my girl, if at times I do give 'e the

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rough side of my tongue 'tis chiefly worry wi' *things*,
and not wi' *ye*. And don't 'e go to think hard o' me.

NANCY: Be it likely, Jim? Thou [*falling into the old West country speech*] thou and me as ha' been courtin' these three years, sure we may speak out frank and free one to other wi'out its bein' took amiss!

[*Jim nods and disappears within a large warehouse, whilst Nancy continues her homeward way.*]

[*In the meantime RAPHAËL is busily painting. GERALD having thrown himself into the desired pose.*]

GERALD: I say, Raphaël, I hope you will soon have finished your picture? I'm awfully worried to-day, and don't feel the least in a mood for "posing."

RAPHAËL: Well! there are but a few more touches needed. On the whole I am as well satisfied with my canvas as any artist can ever aspire to be with his work. Physically, my friend, you exactly embody one's idea of that angel-devil, Lucifer—son of the morning. And in saying this, I am offering you a very high tribute, for I conceive Mephistopheles to have been the possessor of a most singular physical perfection. The author of *Faust* did very wrongly to represent him as a sombre and sinister monster with a discordant cackle. Surely he rather resembles the beautiful Greek conceptions of Hyacinthus, or of Antinoüs. Yet though the Eastern fables are more poetic, the Western creeds are more forcible. Is there not something intellectually seductive in the idea of a fallen angel—one who has loved in heaven, and sorrowed in hell? One who

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has chanted in the angelic-choir and wrought damnation unto mortals! But you, my dear Gerald, you, I fear, are terribly inconsistent. You still wear your royalty uneasily. You are too much pre-occupied with scruples. Scruples, believe me, are a most regrettable weakness. They age one prematurely. They seam the forehead, and they sear the soul.

GERALD. [*laughing.*] I really do not think that I possess as many scruples as you seem to imagine.

RAPHAËL: Ah! then why were you so zealous just now about keeping intact the virtue of that supremely uninteresting little model of mine—that angular and impossible Daphne?

GERALD: [*carelessly.*] Oh, poor little devil, I was rather sorry for her.

RAPHAËL: Precisely. You apprehended that she might lose her moral flawlessness, and to your Puritan instincts this seemed an irreparable loss. Ah, you English think you are very daring when you have not the “Nonconformist conscience” very markedly. Still, *au fond*, you are all alike, scratch a Briton and assuredly you find a—Puritan. The taint of centuries of philistinism is in the blood. It is, however, most strongly marked amongst the *bourgeoisie*, with them “respectability” amounts to a sort of fetish-worship. Your so-called “upper classes” have on the whole thrown off the yoke to a large extent.

GERALD: [*listlessly.*] Really, I have never thought much about the matter. But I daresay you are right.

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RAPHAËL : When I gaze on your England of to-day, I thank the gods that I am not its offspring. What is the spectacle which everywhere presents itself? On the one side a plutocracy crude to commonness; on the other, an aristocracy rotten to corruption!

GERALD : [musingly.] That is surely rather a scathing indictment?

RAPHAËL : None the less—a true one! You see, I am a realist. I wear no “silver domino” to shroud my identity. I sweeten my phrases with no sugared sophisms. Now [continuing discursively] I maintain that an aristocracy, in order to justify its existence, must be picturesque and brilliant. Corrupt it inevitably is—the histories of Imperial Rome, of Mediæval Italy, and of Bourbon France, proclaim this fact all down the ages. Still, I can pardon the Borgia princes all their perfidies for the sake of having held Roman art inviolate from contemporary vandalism; whilst I can condone the crimes of the whole Bourbon Court for the sake of those few *grandes dames* from whose brilliant *salons* the refracted light of genius shed its lustre over a whole universe. Now, what I complain of in your home-grown *noblesse* is an utter want of either grace or wit. I am a Bohemian it is true, but on the rare occasions when I enter a London drawing-room I seek vainly for an oasis in the desert of weary *banalité*. Your insular Lovelace culls his choicest *bon mots* from a music-hall chorus. Your “scion of Plantagenet” models his costumes on some jockey’s fashions—and deems himself

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immortal if he win a race with a horse he would not himself mount for all the world ! Ah ! our "sporting men" are such wonderful unconscious humourists. Success in racing is either a question of the biggest cheque, or the greatest amount of "roping" or "stable tips." A rich man writes out a cheque for the purchase of a horse, most likely chosen for him by *one* expert ; trained for him by *another* expert ; and finally ridden for him by a *third* expert. All the same he—this "sporting personage"—is a hero—a vicarious hero, if you will, yet none the less a hero—who (on the strength of having written this same big cheque) wears his laurels with amazing ease. Some people might find fault with his morals—but I only find fault with his lack of humour! I, for my part, am no "specialist" in morals.

GERALD : You are very frank.

RAPHAËL : [calmly.] Morals, *mon cher*, are all a question of the point of view ; whilst as to principles, I do not believe that such things exist. There are, however, two kinds of prejudices ; commonplace prejudices, and those prejudices which are tinged with emotionalism, and which we are pleased to call principles. Humanity is fond of high-sounding words! However, when all is said and done, I will freely admit that vapid and *borgnée* as may be your English *noblesse*, it is infinitely less offensive than is your British *bourgoisie*. One does not require to live in England for a century to perceive how entirely the country is dominated by its hypocritical middle classes. A modern writer has recently bewailed the fact that

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English genius has suffered and well-nigh perished beneath the pressure of that British middle class opinion "which made a hypocrite of George Eliot, and of Tennyson a chanter of Jubilee odes." To create Jubilee odes! What a *métier* for a poet! A Cæsar, an Alexander, or a Cleopatra are heroic figures who may well "read their history in a nation's eyes." But all modern kingship is an absurdity, a glittering absurdity, if you like—but nevertheless an absurdity! However, a Constitutional monarchy represents a compromise. And there is nothing in life so dear to the British mind as compromise. And I would gladly leave you your Constitutional monarchy or any other state anomaly to the which you all cleave so lovingly, so long as you would revolt nationally against that *bourgeois* hypocrisy which is suffered to dominate all the arts. Take my own profession, for example. The Salon readily welcomes those of my works which half the London galleries deem far too crude for their "lines." On the other hand, these identical pictures, sold *privately* over here, realise far higher prices than they would in France! Oh, your Mrs. Grundy of the public galleries is *impayable*! My sole wonder is that she has not, as yet, insisted on clothing the Laōcoon in knicker-bockers, and arraying Aphrodite in a "reach-me-down" bathing suit. Then with regard to literature, precisely the same thing occurs. Your Mudies and your Smiths, those supreme autocrats, refuse circulation to any book which may not be wholly fit reading for the

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"young person." This young person—true offspring of Mrs. Grundy and of Mr. Pecksniff—and who, after all, represents the tyranny of a minority, is politely supposed to dominate the situation in a nation whose public streets and thoroughfares present each night a very gehenna of unabashed vice.

GERALD: [*slowly.*] Well, I cannot say that Messrs. Smith and Co. were particularly cordial about my DRAMA IN DREGS. Still, I suppose they have as good a right to their opinion, as I have to mine. And, after all, when one considers what the Paris bookstalls are!

RAPHAEL: The French bookstalls are—frank! There is no Smith to paternally supervise the morals of the French reading public. Still, taken as a nation, I am far from sure whether the French are not every whit as virtuous as the English. Only they are less puritanical. An Englishman likes to appear rather better than he is, a Frenchman—rather worse. It is singular [*continuing discursively*] how in matters of finance, puritanism and unscrupulousness can sometimes be combined. Your champion Briton when he is preparing to slay the natives of a gold country convinces others (and possibly even himself) that it is for their good. If you told him that it was for their *goods*, he would at once be scandalised. He would deny being such a "chartered" libertine.

GERALD: [*rather abstractedly.*] I suppose he would.

RAPHAEL: Naturally he would. So few people have

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the courage of their—sins, except perhaps, artists. And they are, of course, *des âmes d'élite*. They live for their sensations, not for their consciences. That is the supreme wisdom. Inartistic people are always harassing themselves over what “other people” will say, what “other people” will suffer, and so forth. That is such a waste of time. Now you, Gerald, you could never have depicted that girl’s tragedy in your DRAMA IN DREGS if you had spent your time bewailing the fate of the actual Milly Darrel, instead of analysing the wonderful sensations which it procured you.

GERALD: [*flushing, and speaking less listlessly than before.*] Raphaël, I don’t think you understand how I felt about that. I was awfully cut up about poor Milly.

RAPHAËL: [*lightly.*] A broken heart is as someone has said “the toll that women must pay to poets.” Besides women adore being martyred. Now this Milly for instance—

GERALD: [*quickly.*] Poor Milly—is dead. Can you not let her rest in peace?

RAPHAËL: I merely used her as an illustration of my meaning. She was, I understand, exceedingly well treated by Lord Warfield until you came across her. And then she broke with him—on your account. And went off and had a “martyrdom” of her own, without informing either of you.

GERALD: [*uneasily.*] Poor girl! I did my best to trace her.]

RAPHAËL: How supremely unwise. If you had found

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her—*quelle corvée*. You might have had her on your hands all your life. By the way [rather abruptly] talking of the future, if anything happened to old Snowdon—and they say his constitution has simply gone to pieces, and the doctors hardly give him another year—would you marry Dolorès Snowdon? She is said to own more dollars than any other daughter of Columbia. And really, you know, it might be quite a good arrangement?

GERALD: One cannot speculate upon dead men's shoes. Moreover [very coldly] I have not the least idea whether Lady Snowdon would accept me.

RAPHAËL: Widows invariably re-marry, it's part of the system.

GERALD: [rather evasively.] I thought that in any case you considered matrimony an absurd situation.

RAPHAËL: So it is—if anyone attempts to take it seriously. Viewed as a convenient expedient for getting over an awkward social dilemma, such as lack of funds and so forth, it undeniably has its merits. Viewed otherwise it is as futile as all the efforts which man has made to fetter Nature. You know Tennyson's lines:—

"Free love—free life—we love but while we may,
New loves are sweet as those that went before:
Free love—free field—we love but while we may."

Freedom is passion's keynote. Vassalage its death-knell. Ah! to return to those golden Arcadian days ere Pan was discrowned by a race of anæmic moralists who have built a prison-house for love, and made

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of passion a heresy. [A pause. RAPHAËL paints on for a few moments in silence, then speaks again.] Move slightly more to this side, please—so—that is right, I want that sun-ray just glinting the hair to fall in a cross light. How pale you are with all the light upon your face! What is the matter, Gerald? Are you suffering from the tragedy of some emotion, or have you been having an unsuccessful little adventure in the city—which? The latter occasionally happens to me, and on my word it is most distressing.

GERALD: [with some surprise.] I had no idea that you ever went to the city?

RAPHAËL: [quickly.] Oh, well, of course I am primarily an artist. Still, you know, we Greeks all find a certain attraction in the hazards of *la haute finance*. The Stock Exchange is far more exciting than *ecarté*—and on the whole quite as profitable.

GERALD: [reflectively.] I suppose so. If one understands it.

RAPHAËL: There is only one key to financial success.

GERALD: And that is—?

RAPHAËL: A supreme egoism. This again the Puritans would deny. But look at all trade. Self-interest is its dominant factor. A man gets the best price for his own brain or brawn, or the brain or brawn of another. This is called commercial acumen.

GERALD: [meditatively.] There is some truth in that. It was brought home very forcibly to me to-day during my interview with my publishers.

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RAPHAËL: Messrs. Newton. Ah! yes. I understand that they know how to drive a shrewd bargain. Have they robbed you—much?

GERALD: They are well to windward of the law, I believe.

RAPHAËL: [with some contempt.] Of course. Of all veiled humourists the men who compiled the law appear to me to have been the greatest. I'm not a Socialist. Socialism is too horny-handed and undecorative to allure me. But I once heard an Irish-American Socialist give a very neat definition of the law. "The law," he said, "is founded upon three fallacies; on the assumption that a man may own three unearned increments. That he may 'own' the land, which should belong to all. That he may 'own' the woman, whose ownership should only be voluntary. That he may 'own' the fruits of other men's toil." These three thefts therefore go to make the basis of the law, and upon this illogical foundation we build up a whole rotten code. Honesty is entirely an intellectual question. The man who steals stupidly is charged with fraud. The man who steals adroitly and on a large scale is given office and civic dinners. It is immoral to steal a penny; but quite moral to steal a province. But to return to our subject. You, Gerald, are, I gather, somewhat in "straits"?

GERALD: [gloomily.] I'm confoundedly hard up!

RAPHAËL: And your father won't help you?

GERALD: [quickly.] He cannot. It is not his fault.

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I daresay you've heard that we are not millionaires at home. My father did all that he could in sending me to Oxford. When I left college I came into the two hundred a year which my grandfather had left me, and this, together with what I made by my work, was all that I had to count on. I lived up to my income, such as it was, from month to month, thinking my book was good to run through plenty more editions. But to-day I had an awful "facer" when Mr. Newton told me that he intended to bring out no more editions.

RAPHAËL: You must write another book. A veritable *magnum opus*.

GERALD: I suppose I must! But in the meantime I must live somehow. I suppose the Jews will give me credit for a time.

RAPHAËL: I would not counsel you to go to the Jews. You see you've no very tempting security to offer them. And even if they lent you money they would charge you an exorbitant percentage. I wish [*reflectively*] that I could help you.

GERALD: [*quickly.*] Oh, don't think about that. I'd any day rather borrow from the Jews than from a friend.

RAPHAËL: [*bending over his canvas.*] Oh, I didn't propose to offer you a loan. I was only wondering if I couldn't see you through some other way.

GERALD: [*gratefully.*] It's really very good of you to worry over my wretched affairs. But I don't think there's anything to be done—except to go to the Jews.

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RAPHAËL: You have some capital, I suppose, to go on with?

GERALD: The capital which up till now has brought in the two hundred a year is not "tied up." I shall draw it out and settle my outstanding debts. Then try and raise some money and live economically [*with rather a wry face*] until I get some more work ready for press.

RAPHAËL: That's not a very brilliant prospect. And as I say again, I think you will make a great mistake in going to the Jews. There [*putting some last touches to his canvas*], I've nearly finished Lucifer. Come round here, and behold yourself. [GERALD approaches the canvas and stands momentarily silent.] Well, what is your verdict? You don't seem very enthusiastic.

GERALD: [*slowly.*] I think the workmanship does you infinite credit.

RAPHAËL: You have something more in your mind.

GERALD: Ah! how quickly you read one's thoughts. Well, if you must have the truth, Raphaël, your picture strikes me as intensely wonderful, and — intensely horrible!

RAPHAËL: You are not over complimentary, *mon cher!* Let us hope the Salon critics will be less merciless.

GERALD: [*half to himself.*] I almost wish that I had never sat for that picture! The portrayal is no doubt exact. But the expression! Do you know that it is very horrible to see a devil in one's own shape?

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Were I superstitious, Raphaël, I should almost believe that you had employed some Black Art in your painting! . . .

RAPHAËL: [*rather brutally.*] Say rather the art of prophecy! My friend, some score of years hence—when you are looking back upon your life's record—I do not doubt that your eyes will hold just the same expression as that with which my Lucifer yonder looks back at the closed gates of a lost Paradise. I intend to write at the foot of the picture—

“O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen! ”

Surely you think the phrase appropriate?

GERALD: [*rather dubiously.*] Yes—no doubt. And now good-morning. I must leave you.

RAPHAËL: Well, I'm going into the city to-morrow, and I'll keep your matters in view.

GERALD: [*warmly.*] It's really most awfully good of you.

RAPHAËL: Not at all. I'm always glad to serve my friends. You have made a superb Lucifer, and one good turn deserves another, so if I hear of any easy speculation or such like, likely to benefit you, I'll let you know at once. London is after all the modern “City of Golden Gates.” Money's mostly to be made with a little skill, and a little promptness. And after all, I'm sure Gerald, you were never intended to live on bovril and tinned meats.

GERALD: [*ruefully.*] I certainly do not feel enamoured of the prospect. It is not exhilarating.

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RAPHAËL: It is quite impossible to one of your tastes and temperament, I should think. No, we must try and devise some other means for building up your fallen fortunes. Are you disengaged on Thursday?

GERALD: Yes, I believe so.

RAPHAËL: *Tant mieux.* We will dine together at the Savoy, and have some further talk over your affairs. By the way, George Carruthers, the Australian millionaire, is dining with me that night. You know him, I think, for you must have met him at Zizi Zanoni's? He is at present her *adorateur en chef*, and, by the way, he must be a serious and solid admirer to make her tolerate his "dangling" about the place. Oh, what it is to be a millionaire and to be able to conceal all one's defects beneath the glitter of diamond *porte bonheurs*.

GERALD: [good-naturedly.] Well, he is rather undersized and puny-looking, but he can't help that, I suppose. And he seems a good-hearted little chap.

RAPHAËL: [rather contemptuously.] He inherited all his money unexpectedly from a miserly old uncle. And he has not the slightest idea what to do with it.

GERALD: [laughing.] Well, that's curious. I wish some "miserly" old uncle would leave me a million of money.

RAPHAËL: [glancing out of the window.] Speak of Mephistopheles and he's certain to appear.

GERALD: That is rather rough on George Carruthers, who is nothing if not inoffensive.

RAPHAËL: [sotto voce.] "Inoffensive people" are an

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evil against which somebody—perhaps even those busy-bodies on the County Council—certainly ought to legislate!

[Enter GEORGE CARRUTHERS, an under-sized, seemingly timid lad of about twenty-three. RAPHAËL greets him warmly, whilst GERALD nods with careless amiability.]

GEORGE CARRUTHERS: [handing RAPHAËL a note.] I have a box at the Opera to-night. Zizi told me to give you this, and to ask if you'd join us.

RAPHAËL: [effusively.] Delighted, my friend. What is the opera?

GEORGE CARRUTHERS: [who stammers slightly.] Oh, I forget. But I b-believe it's *Faust*, and that Melba and Jean de Reszke and all that lot are singing. [Turning rather awkwardly to GERALD.] Won't you come too, St. Olave? Zizi didn't say anything about anyone else. But the box holds four and [innocently] you're an old friend of hers, I believe.

GERALD: [hurriedly.] So good of you to think of me. Unhappily I'm engaged. Many thanks all the same [they shake hands and GERALD passes out].

GEORGE CARRUTHERS: It's a pity St. Olave couldn't come. [RAPHAËL slightly shrugs his shoulders but makes no audible comment. GEORGE CARRUTHERS presently saunters across to the easel, and after a brief pause remarks good humouredly.] What a good-looking young chap St. Olave is.

RAPHAËL CORNARI: Handsome—yes! But where lies the gain in being as handsome as a Greek god, when

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one is likewise—a pauper? Believe me, *mon cher*, those people are fortunate who have a big balance in Lombard Street—and not in the Venusberg!

GEORGE CARRUTHERS: [rather uncertainly.] Yes, I suppose so—but [examining the painting more minutely], this—although I know nothing about art—seems to me to be an awfully strange, uncanny sort of picture? Of course [apologetically], I don't mean that it's not tremendously clever, and so on. Still the Lucifer you have painted seems to have such a dreadfully-pathetic sort of air. Not so much wicked you know, as regretful—and—and [rather lamely] well, all that.

RAPHAËL CORNARI: [with a slight sneer.] Ah! my friend, I had no idea that you were a “symbolist.” But perhaps you have been reading Marie Corelli's works?

GEORGE CARRUTHERS: Good gracious, no! I could never make head or tail of those sort of books. But all the same you know, there is something very—what do you call it?—suggestive—about your Lucifer.

RAPHAËL CORNARI: [gazing at the canvas with a somewhat enigmatical smile, and speaking rather to himself, than to his companion.] Gerald St. Olave's Lucifer represents the Spirit of Remorse, the Angel-fiend doomed evermore to mourn the Paradise of a Dead Innocence. To weep the things that have been—to curse the things that are! But [with a sudden change of tone] let us not vex our souls as to the “true inwardness” of my

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picture, but rather go and settle with Madame Zizi about this evening's entertainment. [Exit together.]

* * * *

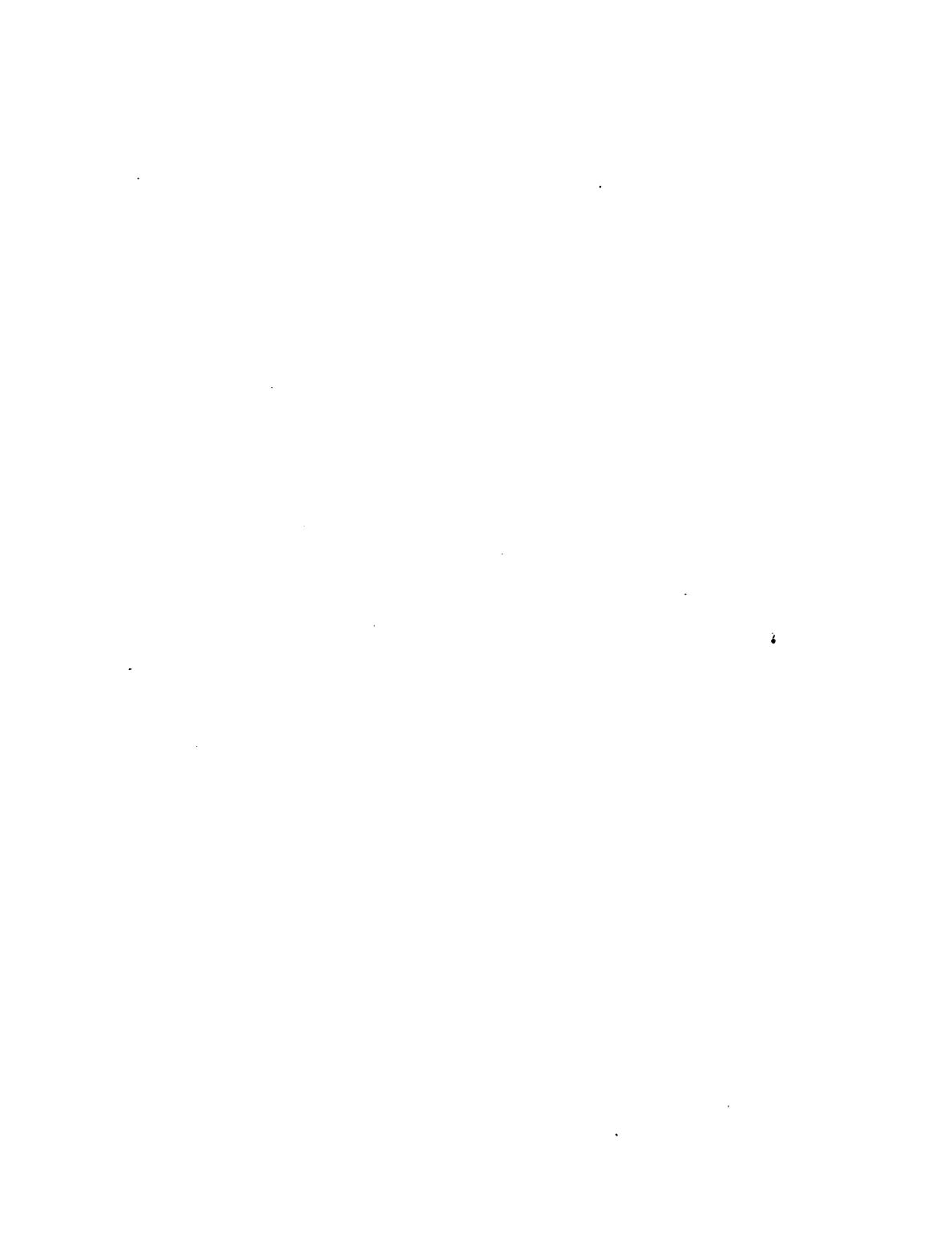
In the meanwhile although the sun is shining fiercely GERALD shivers a little as he passes down the street. "Do I grow a superstitious fool?" [he mutters impatiently.] "What matter though a score of Lucifers be painted in my image! There are neither devils nor angels —there is neither right nor wrong—so they say. There is only the expedient! I must shake off these morbid fancies. And yet [shudders a little] yet it is strange how those old priests' stories haunt one." [He pauses a moment irresolutely, then turns his steps down a narrow side street and halts on the threshold of a small and rather dingy-looking house. From above comes the sound of many voices, and the chink of passing money. GERALD takes out his purse. It contains a few gold pieces. . . He looks at them and hesitates, then mutters—"These may be better than the Jews, speedier than hack-work. At least one can but try." . . He hurriedly mounts the narrow stairway, enters the upstairs chamber, and takes his place at one of the tables. . .

An hour later, when he quits the house, his face is deathly pale, and his eyes looked strange and wild.

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ACT II.

A CROWN OF THORN-AND-CYPRESS.



A DRAMA IN DREGS.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

SCENE. *The dining-room, St. Olave Court. The sun is streaming brightly in through the big bay windows. Luncheon is just over.*

PRESENT:

SIR RUPERT ST. OLAVE.

LADY CLARICE, *his wife.*

ENID ST. OLAVE, *aged seventeen.*

MURIEL, *generally called "MUMPS,"* }
aged eleven. } Their daughters.

FRÄULEIN DOMPELMIER, *an austere, blue-spectacled Hanoverian.*

SIR RUPERT: [rising.] Three o'clock! Well, I must soon be off to the County Council [turning to *Lady Clarice*]. Is there anything that I can do for you in Lynmouth?

LADY CLARICE: [reflecting.] I should be glad if you would leave a message at Dr. Grahame's. I think he had better come over to-morrow and see Leo.

SIR RUPERT: Poor boy! Do you think he is not so well to-day?

LADY CLARICE: He has had a bad night.

MUMPS: I thought so, Mother. I took him in the

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retriever pups early this morning and he did not seem to care the least for them.

SIR RUPERT: [*laughing.*] What a veritable baby you are, Mumps. As if anyone except yourself would enjoy having retriever puppies tumbling about their room.

MUMPS: Gerald would have liked to have seen them. By-the-bye, he's never answered my last letter. Will he soon be coming home?

SIR RUPERT: [*briefly.*] No, he will not. [*Quits the room rather abruptly.*]

MUMPS: [*detaining Lady Clarice as she is also leaving.*] Mother, the Beauchamp girls are going out to look for wood-strawberries this afternoon. And they mean to have such a lovely pic-nic tea down by the lily-pond.

LADY CLARICE: Really, dear. Well, they have chosen a beautiful day.

MUMPS: [*mournfully.*] Yes, but I'm afraid they'll all be *dreadfully* disappointed at my not going. I'm quite the best at "hooking" away the tangled bushes you know.

LADY CLARICE: [*laughing.*] You do not underrate your own value, my dear child. However [*reflectively*] this is Saturday afternoon and your half-holiday, so perhaps Fräulein could spare you.

MUMPS: [*dejectedly.*] I've got to rewrite both my German exercises.

LADY CLARICE: As a punishment, I suppose, for having done them very badly at first?

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MUMPS: [*reluctantly.*] Well, they were a little scrawly, perhaps.

FRÄULEIN D.: [*grimly.*] Ach ! Miladi. Shocking is it to see the manner in which that much-to-be-condemned child approaches the soul-inspiring tongue of Schiller and of Goethe. Vainly do I exhort. Vainly do I upbraid, until at length I say, that she who so conducts herself merits to attend no festival.

MUMPS: Mother, it *is* so hard not to go to the picnic !

LADY CLARICE: You hear what Fräulein has said, Muriel.

MUMPS: Don't call me "Muriel," Mother—I shall think you are annoyed.

LADY CLARICE: [*gravely.*] Most certainly I am annoyed. You appear to have been extremely careless over your lessons.

FRÄULEIN D.: [*impressively.*] When I consider the glorious and never-to-be-sufficiently appreciated possibilities uprising from a knowledge of the great German speech, then indeed do I wring my spirit, and demand with soul-bitterness, how any pupil of mine should thus disgracefully behave !

MUMPS: [*meditatively, looking out of window.*] The first fine Saturday we've had this month.

LADY CLARICE: Will the exercises take up the entire afternoon ?

FRÄULEIN D.: [*glaring sternly at MUMPS.*] Anyone who can say that they believe, that "the dative usually

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governs the accusative" is likely to prolong the time needful to any German exercise.

LADY CLARICE: [to MUMPS.] Why can you not pay proper attention? Such mistakes are disgraceful. They can only spring from sheer carelessness. I fear you take no pains whatever.

MUMPS: [tearfully.] Mother, indeed I do try. But German grammar is so [seeking about for a term which may not further incense the FRÄULEIN] so very unexpected.

FRÄULEIN D.: [excitedly.] Dat is a fat untruth. I affirm de German grammar is not at all "unexpected"! He is always simple, grand, beautiful!

MUMPS: [apologetically.] Oh, yes, of course. I only meant that it, er—sometimes takes a person by surprise.

LADY CLARICE: That depends I think a good deal on the "person."

MUMPS: [continuing apologetically.] This morning also it was so dreadfully hot. My head felt just like toffy in the sun. Otherwise I am sure I should have got on beautifully.

LADY CLARICE: And on Monday do you think there will be less probability of your head feeling like "toffy in the sun."

MUMPS: [sanguinely.] Yes, I'm sure of it.

LADY CLARICE: And can you truthfully assure Fräulein that you are very sorry about to-day?

MUMPS: [penitently] I'm dreadfully sorry Mo—, I mean Fräulein.

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LADY CLARICE: [turning to FRÄULEIN D.] Well, as to-day is Saturday, do you think you could perhaps stretch a point and pardon this little madcap?

FRÄULEIN D.: [without enthusiasm.] I leave you to decide, Miladi.

MUMPS: [piteously.] Do let me off, Mother!—just this once.

LADY CLARICE: Well, Mumps, if I do so, do not give me reason afterwards to regret it.

MUMPS: [earnestly.] Mother dear, next week I'll simply slave at that grammar if you wish it.

LADY CLARICE: I hope you will. And [musingly] there is a German line, which I wish you would try to remember. "Im ganzen, guten schönen. Resolut zu leben." Do you understand that?

MUMPS: I'm afraid not, Mother.

LADY CLARICE: Freely translated it means, "Let us try always to follow, what is great, and good, and beautiful."

MUMPS: [reflectively.] I like that idea. Only it would be difficult for a person always to remember.

LADY CLARICE: Well, let *this* "person" try her best.

MUMPS: [embracing her mother effusively.] She will!

LADY CLARICE: [disengaging herself.] My dear child, you are a little adhesive. I suppose it's the toffy. And, dear me! what an overwhelming smell of peppermint.

MUMPS: I bought some for the poor little deaf-and-dumb child at the Lodge. He thinks it such a treat. Surely you do not object?

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LADY CLARICE: By no means. Only another time if you could take it direct to the Lodge perhaps it would be a good plan.

MUMPS: [*cheerfully.*] Just as you like, Mother. But it would never have struck me that anyone could *dislike* peppermint.

LADY CLARICE: Perhaps it may be a personal prejudice. However, run away now, and put on your hat.

[*Exit MUMPS prancing joyously.*]

LADY CLARICE: [*to FRÄULEIN D.*] I hope you do not mind? Really I had not the heart to keep her in on such a fine day.

FRÄULEIN D.: Ach! Miladi. There is no real blackness in that young soul. Yet the children of England are all the same. The fields, the woods, the dogs, the games-round, they adore. Yet the learning which is as golden treasure they love not. And to call the German grammar "unexpected" that is, as you English say a slander!

LADY CLARICE: [*consolingly.*] Some day Mumps will know better, and will see that it is the stairway which leads to a golden land of literature.

[*Enter servant bearing letter.*]

LADY CLARICE: [*having glanced through letter.*] Has Sir Rupert gone out yet?

SERVANT: I think he is in the study, my lady.

LADY CLARICE: [*moving towards the study.*] Very well. Say that I shall require the carriage for the afternoon train to London. And please send these

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telegrams at once [*hands him two telegrams, one addressed to GERALD ST. OLAVE and the other to LADY CHISEL-HURST.*]

[*A few moments later SIR RUPERT is pacing restlessly to and fro in his study when LADY CLARICE enters.*]

LADY CLARICE: Gerald writes me word that he and Berkeley Wentworth sail for Mexico to-morrow night.

SIR RUPERT: [*curtly.*] That is nothing to me. If Berkeley Wentworth chooses to be such a fool as to accept Gerald as overseer of his ranch, that is his own affair.

LADY CLARICE: Berkeley Wentworth has been a very good friend to Gerald. We owe him a great deal of gratitude.

SIR RUPERT: [*gloomily.*] Wentworth is—or until he let his place, was—a near neighbour of ours, and for that reason, I hope he may not live to rue his good nature. But I fear, Clarice, you undertook a grave responsibility in recommending him to take Gerald.

LADY CLARICE: The suggestion originated with him. As I told you, when he heard of poor Gerald's trouble, he wrote and asked if he would like the appointment. As soon as I had heard from Gerald that he would accept it, I told Berkeley Wentworth, and he and Gerald settled the matter between them.

SIR RUPERT: [*meditatively.*] Still, I suppose it was for the sake of auld lang syne, and out of friendship for you, that Berkeley Wentworth interested himself in the young scamp's welfare. Clarice, I hope this thing will

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turn out well. I like Wentworth and [*with momentary hesitation*] I fear he has but little cause to be grateful either to me or mine. Nearly all our married life he has been an absentee from his place.

LADY CLARICE: I cannot quite see how that bears directly on this present question.

SIR RUPERT: Except that Wentworth would go through fire and water to serve you to-day, as readily as he would have done twenty years ago. And you have imposed a grave responsibility upon him, namely, that of taking charge of a graceless ne'er-do-well.

LADY CLARICE: [*quietly.*] I think we must agree to differ about Gerald. I have arranged to go up to my sister Muriel Chiselhurst this evening, and to see Gerald to-morrow morning. Rupert, have you no message for him? Will you not let me say *anything* kind from you? He is very life-sick and very heart-sick, poor boy. He is going far away, and it may be years before we see him again. Surely you will send him some message?

SIR RUPERT: [*bitterly.*] Message, no! But you can if you choose tell him from me that I consider him a damned—I beg your pardon, Clarice—a disgraceful young scoundrel.

LADY CLARICE: [*sighing.*] Your letter will have reached him and he will know your opinion already. To refer to it would merely give him needless pain.

SIR RUPERT: [*angrily.*] That we should ever have had a son like that. It is outrageous! The next thing he will expect, I suppose, is that I should furnish

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him with unlimited funds, and receive him back with open arms. Faugh!

LADY CLARICE: I think you are hardly just to Gerald. He has never asked you for anything. And you have no absolute *proof* that he did what you believe—with regard to this money.

SIR RUPERT: Proof! Well there seems no possible *dis-proof*, and moreover his whole life is proof enough of the probability of his behaving like a scoundrel. He has known all along how hard pressed we are, and yet he thinks nothing of squandering his money in loose living and neglecting his work; of making an intimate friend of a blackguard like Raphaël Cornari; of publishing a book like the DRAMA IN DREGS; and of leading the generally contemptible life he appears to have chosen.

LADY CLARICE: I disapprove of all the "decadents" quite as much as you do, perhaps even more. Still, Gerald is very young, and the artistic temperament is proverbially impressionable. Moreover, who knows how much his "decadent" attitude may not have been a boyish *pōse*? A foolish *pōse*, I admit, but hardly so unpardonable as you seem to assume.

SIR RUPERT: [fiercely.] If I had my way, I'd take all the "decadent" gang heel and crop and duck them in the nearest horsepond! That's about all they're fit for. And as to Berkeley Wentworth, I'm afraid he'll find he's saddled himself with a bad bargain, for I don't see what earthly use Gerald will be to him on his ranch.

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LADY CLARICE: The principal work of the ranch seems to be the breaking in, and training of young horses. And Gerald, as you know, can ride [moves to the oriel window and points to the steep Exmoor ridges stretching far away in the distance]. You will hardly assert that anyone who can ride as "straight" as Gerald has ridden a score of times over a country—like that—is likely to be useless on a ranch? Moreover, I think you should at least do our boy the justice to admit that he is doing his best now to get away from his old associations, and to make a clean start.

SIR RUPERT: I don't deny that good stiff work on a ranch may perhaps make a man of him—if anything will. Still, I don't want him ever to darken these doors again. He is no fit associate for his sisters.

LADY CLARICE: Since you have no message, I think it is useless to prolong this discussion. Only I am sorry you will not let me say anything kind from you. He is going away for so long—and we may never see him again, Rupert. If he were never to return, you would, I think, be sorry to have parted—thus?

SIR RUPERT: [turning aside abruptly.] Rubbish invariably floats. He will be home again before this time next year, whimpering probably about the place.

LADY CLARICE: [with calm decision.] He will never set foot in this place again until you bid him, Rupert. You know he is every whit as proud as you are. He would, I believe, rather starve or break stones on the

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road than accept a farthing from you now. However, we had better close this discussion. [Sighs and passes out in silence.]

SIR RUPERT: [muttering to himself.] I'm glad she said no more. If she had, I might have given in. There's nothing like a woman for making a fool of a man—just when he ought to be most firm. She's going to see him. Well, it's a great mistake. Weak, very weak. Still, she's the lad's mother—and when all's said and done, a hard woman's a very fiend!

[LADY CLARICE is joined by ENID as she is going upstairs.]

ENID: Mother, have you a few moments a spare?

LADY CLARICE: Not many, dear child. Still, if you have anything special to say to me, come in here.

[They enter Lady Clarice's boudoir. Enid sinks rather languidly down on a low stool at her mother's feet.]

ENID: Mother, I wanted to ask you about Gerald. I could not continue the subject at luncheon before the servants. But from father's tone, I felt that something must be wrong. Is it anything that I can know about?

LADY CLARICE: [after a pause.] You are wise and discreet, Enid, and I see no reason why you should not know the outlines of your brother's story. Poor Gerald has got into very serious difficulties. He has—to put the matter crudely—even been accused of forgery.

ENID: [in a startled tone.] Mother, you don't believe him guilty.

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LADY CLARICE: [with decision.] Of course not, dear. I believe poor Gerald, reckless and heedless though he certainly is in many respects, is absolutely incapable of doing anything so dishonourable.

ENID: [quickly.] I'm sure he is. Poor dear boy! Forgery is stealing, is it not? And as if Jerry, the most generous open-handed being in the world, could be capable of such a thing! But can anyone seriously believe it of him?

LADY CLARICE: [sadly.] Most people frame their judgments, perhaps not unnaturally, according to outside circumstances. And all of these are in poor Gerald's disfavour.

ENID: I do not quite understand. Why can he not explain that he had nothing to do with all this wrong doing?

LADY CLARICE: He has endeavoured to demonstrate his innocence, but without succeeding in convincing others. The case is very involved, dear. It would be difficult for me to make you understand all its legal bearings. But alas! the fact remains that poor Gerald is seriously compromised and implicated in this matter.

ENID: [in a tone of dismay.] Will they imprison him?

LADY CLARICE: No. I hear that George Carruthers, the man upon whom the forgery was perpetrated, has decided not to prosecute. Legal punishment, therefore, Gerald will escape. But from the general disgrace he cannot be shielded. Even your father

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and your Uncle Stagholt cannot believe in his innocence. It is all dreadfully sad. Poor Gerald writes me heart-broken letters. He is leaving England immediately. You remember Berkeley Wentworth, the owner of Englemere, who has sometimes been over here?

ENID: The big, dark, silent man who is always travelling to and fro to Mexico?

LADY CLARICE: Yes. He has very generously offered Gerald the post of overseer on his ranch. They are going out together. They sail to-morrow night.

ENID: Poor, poor, Jerry. Can I not see him first?

LADY CLARICE: Darling, I fear that is impossible. Your father would not wish it.

ENID: [mournfully.] Dear old Jerry. I'm sure he never did anything horrid about money. Mother, shall you see him?

LADY CLARICE: Yes, I shall see him to-morrow. I am going up to London to stay with your Aunt Muriel Chiselhurst.

ENID: Then will you give him my dear, dear love, and say that you and I at least shall *always* believe in him, come what may. And there is a water-colour of the Court I have finished. Will you give it to him from me?

LADY CLARICE: I shall not forget, dear.

ENID: [with a little shudder.] Mother, don't you think that life seems to be full of horrid things and horrid people?

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LADY CLARICE: Surely that sounds a little drastic for your namesake, "Enid, sweet and serviceable" of heart.

ENID: Mother, I think that hardly answers my question.

LADY CLARICE: What is there you wish me to tell you? Or is there perhaps something that you wish to tell me?

ENID: Yes. There is something. Only I don't know quite how to put it into words. [A pause.] Last week, when I was staying at Stagholme, I came across a book —what is called a problem novel. It was very nasty; only I am afraid it was true? And—and it has haunted me ever since.

LADY CLARICE: I think I understand your trouble. But tell me, had none of these "problems" ever occurred to you *before* you came across this book?

ENID: [with some embarrassment.] Well—yes. I'm afraid perhaps they had.

LADY CLARICE: You need not reproach yourself, dear. You are reaching womanhood now, Enid, and you are thoughtful beyond your years, and it would be unnatural, rather than natural, if the great physiological problems of marriage and of motherhood had never presented themselves to your mind. Upon some girls (those who like Mumps are inclined to be "tomboys") what is usually called "feminity" descends but slowly. But you are of a different type. And with all of you, who are girls to-day, rests in a wide measure the wel-

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fare of the race of the future. It is better that you should face all your responsibilities. And that is impossible unless you understand them.

ENID: Yes, Mother, I see that. And I believe many girls feel what you say, and what I have felt in a sort of vague way. Only they are so hampered! Now [*confidentially*] Irene and Viola Beauchamp, for instance, told me the other day that they were dreadfully worried over things they had heard talked about in London. But Lady Amersham will let them read nothing hardly, except Miss Yonge's novels. They (only don't repeat it, please) they would *so* much like to read Zola.

LADY CLARICE: [*to herself.*] Poor Cynthia Amersham, and these are her model young daughters! [*aloud.*] What I think dear, you most need, is to get a right balance, a correct perspective of life. I am not sure that Zola would be more likely to give you this than Miss Yonge. The one describes abnormal vice and the other abnormal virtue. You who are so fond of painting know how untrue to nature would be a picture painted without shadow. You know also, that shadows may be exaggerated to an extent which can mar the entire canvas. Well, I think one may look at life in very much the same manner. Human nature is full of shadows, of half-lights and of reflections. One must start by frankly admitting that ignorance is not innocence, although to the superficial observer they may seem synonymous; to be ignorant often means to be walking blindfolded on the verge of a precipice. To be

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really innocent means to wear always "the white flower of a blameless life." You understand?

ENID: Yes, I think so. And I'm so glad you don't think it horrid of me, Mother, to wish to know more about—life. . . . [hesitates.]

LADY CLARICE: I think it shows an awakening sense of moral responsibility. Women are often perhaps inclined to underrate their need for acquiring a knowledge of life. And this seems to me to be an infinite pity. For they have a great deal of influence in the world. In every day life often far more than men.

ENID: [musingly.] Yes, Mother, that is true—people always seem to consult *you*.

LADY CLARICE: [laughing.] My dear child, where are your usually faultless manners? Have you forgotten that it is not *bien élevé* to indulge in personalities? However, with regard to problems. Are there many things that you wish to know?

ENID: A good many things perplex me.

LADY CLARICE: [after a pause.] There are some subjects which I could not undertake to discuss with you. You see this, do you not? And on the whole it seems to me that the details of the knowledge to which you refer, are best learned from books.

ENID: From problem novels?

LADY CLARICE: No.

ENID: You disapprove of problem novels?

LADY CLARICE: Yes—and no. I do not wholly condemn them. Many of them I believe represent a well-

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meant, though badly executed endeavour to arrest and to improve public opinion upon various grave questions. On the other hand the pre-eminence which they give to certain physical aspects of life seems to me, I admit, a little lacking in refinement—a little grotesque. One must remember the French proverb: "*Toute vérité est bonne : mais toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire.*" That is to say, there is an "eternal fitness" in things, and in conditions, which makes it better, when possible, to approach all matters from an appropriate standpoint.

ENID: Then you think it is chiefly a question of good taste?

LADY CLARICE: Of good sense first—ultimately of good taste. If you wish to understand physiological problems, you will, if you take my advice, go straight to the fountain-head. Many scientists have written excellent, and far too little read standard works upon all the questions which bear upon health, heredity, marriage, motherhood, and so on. They approach their subjects in a "cleanly" and impersonal manner. They will teach you a great deal that it is essential for a woman to know. And at the same time you will not be haunted by unpleasant memories. Would you like me to send for some of these books from the library?

ENID: Yes, Mother, please do. Ah! [sighing] what a pity that Irene and Viola cannot read them also. They, especially Irene, worry so dreadfully over things. Could I not lend her some of these books?

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LADY CLARICE : Not without her parents' consent.

ENID : [earnestly.] Her parents don't know in the least how she feels. How should they ? Lord Amersham is always absorbed with Kerry cows and prize heifers, and Lady Amersham has formed in her own mind, a kind of lay-figure of Irene, which is not in the slightest degree like the original. Mother [*rather abruptly*], have you noticed any *change* lately in Irene ?

LADY CLARICE : I have hardly seen her for some time.

ENID : Could we have her over here to stay soon ?

LADY CLARICE : Yes, if you wish it. But I doubt whether she could be spared from home. I think they have a house party at the Abbey ; at least the Devereux' were there the other day and some more people.

ENID : All the party have left with the exception of the Devereux'. By the way, what do you think of them ?

LADY CLARICE : I have known Victor Devereux all my life. He was in the Blues with your uncle Stagholme. He has a great deal of personal charm, I think. As to his wife, I have only met her a few times. She had a great deal of money—was a Birmingham heiress I believe. And he married her rather late in life.

ENID : To return to Irene ; I will write and ask her to come over.

LADY CLARICE : Yes, it will be pleasant to see her again. She used to be over here so much. But we

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seem rather to have lost sight of her of late. By the way [*musingly*], the reason that you and Irene are such great friends, Enid, must surely be explained by the doctrine of opposites. You are so quiet and dreamy, whilst she is so overflowing with animal vitality. The extremes must meet and merge I suppose.

ENID: [*rather wearily*.] That may be the reason; or it may be because we each in our several ways find life so difficult !

LADY CLARICE: [*quotes smiling.*]

“Oh! what shall I be at fifty
If Nature should keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter,
Before I am twenty-five !”

After all we shape our lives a great deal by our own deeds. And if you would make a good thing of life you must try, dear, and shake off your pessimism. But I must leave you now or I shall miss my train. And this, after all, is a work-a-day world, my Enid !

ENID: [*suddenly rousing herself.*] Don’t stay away long, Mother, I shall be wretched without you. And [*a moment later*] here is the painting for Jerry. He always said that the Court was loveliest in the autumn, when all the creepers were red-gold, so perhaps this little sketch may please him? You know [*with a little flush*] it took the first prize at one of the art competitions.

LADY CLARICE: Yes, I remember. And I am sure poor Gerald will appreciate your having given him of your best.

[*Kisses Enid and quits the room.*]

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SCENE II.

[*The following day. GERALD is sitting over an almost untasted breakfast when a letter is brought him. He opens it. At the end is his father's signature. He reads the letter slowly, his pale face growing paler as he reads. When he has finished it, he rises unsteadily and moves in a dazed way to and fro the room. One sentence in the letter seems to have branded itself with a merciless exactitude upon his mind, for he repeats it several times half-mechanically to himself.*]

“ From henceforth the home of your childhood must never more shelter you. You are no fit associate for your sisters. And to me you are—dead ! ” . . .

[*After a few moments the door is suddenly thrown open, and a beautiful, dark-haired woman enters unannounced.*]

GERALD: [*starting up.*] Lady Snowdon! You here—is it possible? [*Pushes forward a chair.*]

LADY SNOWDON: [*speaking with a rather embarrassed air and with a marked American accent.*] Well, yes, it's me. Hope I'm not disarranging you. But I wanted to talk to you about a little private matter, so I thought I'd best be spry.

GERALD: Anything I can do to serve you I shall of course be most happy—

LADY SNOWDON: [*cutting him short.*] Well, it's this way—and as there's no use beating about the bush, I'll come straight to facts. I'm awfully sorry too for your bad luck; town's all talking about it, and it seems rough on you. I daresay you were pressed for money, and it's a pity they were so sharp on you.

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GERALD: [with some dignity.] I know you mean it kindly, but I must ask you, Lady Snowdon, to reserve your pity. Had I done what you and others seem to believe, I should be deserving of no pity. As it is, I have nothing in that way to reproach myself with.

LADY SNOWDON: Oh, well, I didn't mean to rile you; of course no doubt it's a moral satisfaction and all that to you to know that you've run straight over the concern. Still, on the other hand, I reckon you won't find life in London just now all molasses!

GERALD: [briefly.] I am going to America. I leave London this evening.

LADY SNOWDON: Yes, I surmised you'd be making tracks. Well, before you go, there's some—well, some correspondence of mine I'd be grateful if you'd—
[pauses.]

GERALD: Some letters of yours? Ah, yes, I quite understand; of course I will return them to you.
[crosses to a small bureau and begins to fit in a key. Continuing to speak.] There are only two here—two which contained some future arrangements. All the rest I have destroyed.

LADY SNOWDON: [rather sharply.] Only two! and I've written you such piles—and—well, women are such fools on paper [draws a cheque out of her purse and unfolds it rather ostentatiously].

GERALD: [turning suddenly and pointing to the cheque.] May I ask what that is?

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LADY SNOWDON : Oh, just a cheque. I thought perhaps—you were rather slow about—

GERALD : [quietly.] You came to offer to—to pay me for the return of your letters?

LADY SNOWDON : Well, you see I was raised in a business country, and I thought perhaps a little advance might—

GERALD : [laying down the key and speaking very quietly.] Might help matters? I see. Will you kindly hand me that cheque? Thank you. [Glances at it a moment then deliberately tears it across, and flings the fragments into the grate. Lady Snowdon looks on in amazement.] GERALD [after a moment's pause.] If you had sent a man on your embassy to-day I should have known better how to answer him—as it is—I wish to say no more [returns to the bureau, takes out two letters, and hands them carefully to Lady Snowdon. She flushes hotly as she receives them].

LADY SNOWDON : Gerald, you make me feel kind o' mean, I didn't think you'd take it like—that.

GERALD : [coldly.] Since I am generally branded as a forger I suppose it is not surprising that I should be accredited with being also a blackmailer of women!

LADY SNOWDON : I'm afraid you're downright mad with me. And I'm sorry—but I'm not yet used to your ways over in Europe. Down Mexico way, persons are different. Rile 'em and they're poisonous as snakes in a swamp. They're not like you queer, calm, English folk, who are so silent, but who never—forget! As to the letters—I felt I'd feel better if I knew they

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were clean gone! I was an awful fool to write them—that's sure. And I didn't want them cropping up any time. I've had a hard life, Gerald, a big part of my days. And now I'm married to one of your English swells, I know what position means. It's a four-horse concern, being asked out everywhere and going to Court—and I didn't want to risk it all by having made a fool of myself.

GERALD : [quietly.] I see no reason why you should risk anything, Lady Snowdon, but [glancing at the clock] I am expecting my Mother in a few moments and perhaps—

LADY SNOWDON : [half resentfully.] You think, I suppose, I'm not good enough to meet her?

GERALD : Of course I did not mean that. Only I understood that your visit to me this morning was purely personal.

LADY SNOWDON : [speaking meditatively.] Wal, I guess you're not far out. It don't do to look compromised in the old world, though, heart alive! as to morals, *there* most folks wink the other eye. But your Mother,—she's one of the Stagholme lot, isn't she? I know some of 'em. And, bless me, what a manner they've got of freezing a body. Now once I stayed a week in a house with Lady Chiselhurst—your Mother's sister. One night we were skirt-dancing, and some of us got at play a bit—and I asked her to play the Bar-maid's Chorus. Wal, I reckon if I'd asked her to sweep the kitchen chimney she couldn't have been more

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disgusted. She looked at me, too, as though I'd been a scallyrag! Folks whose relatives went spiking Saracens with Plantagenet, or "grailing" with King Arthur, don't seem able to get the memory of it out of their dorsal muscles. And on my word [*reflectively*] for sheer cool set-you-downishness, I believe your London women would whip creation. Well, your men marry us, and like our piles. But it seems to me your women won't ever cotton to us—any way. Yes, I'd certainly best be making tracks.

GERALD: Is your carriage here—or shall I send for a cab?

LADY SNOWDON: A cab, please, [*a moment later, speaking with some emotion*] Gerald, I'm sorry it's good-bye. We have had some good times together, haven't we?

GERALD: [*gently.*] Good-bye. Yes, I am very sorry also that it must be good-bye [*is about to open the door for her, when Lady Snowdon lays her hand detainedly upon his arm*].

LADY SNOWDON: Gerald, [*and her scarlet lips quiver a little*] Gerald—surely it is not—*quite* good-bye. You sail for America to-night—still you will come back—some day?

GERALD: I may, or I may not. But if I do return, it can never be to my old life, or my old friendships.

LADY SNOWDON: But you would come and see me?

GERALD: I think your husband would not wish to see me.

LADY SNOWDON: Of course not, that old reprobate

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hasn't as much moral sense as would cover a cent piece—but he's awfully keen on doing as other folks do. Still, he's mostly shut up in his own rooms, and knows no more who I receive than the man in the moon. You could still come and see *me*.

GERALD : There are some things that it is difficult to put into words. And perhaps women view these questions differently from men. But if you do not understand, at least I must ask you to believe, that when a man would (as he deems justifiably), cut me in the street, and blackball me at all his clubs, it would be impossible for me to go to his house.

LADY SNOWDON : [sarcastically.] *His* house, indeed ! Why, it's precious few dollars of the rent our landlord would ever see if *I* didn't square up accounts with him.

GERALD : [gently but rather wearily.] Still, the principle I think remains the same.

LADY SNOWDON : Principle—rubbish ! Now, don't you run off with that notion. My marriage with Snowdon was a business arrangement, just that, and no more. I was the best looking girl round East Camp, and my folks had made the biggest pile. I was sick of the life out there. And I was ambitious, too, and wanted to see Europe. Wal, old Snowdon came along. He was a used-up old rake even at that time. But he was a British peer, and had been a lord-in-waiting, and all the rest of it. And folks out there thought some beans of that. So I took him. But heart

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alive! Do you think a body, young and spry like me, could care for a dried-up old mummy like that? Ugh! he makes me sick. Still, I've a fairish time, all told. The chaps come round me like bees round honey. There's Lord Kingsclere,—it does make all the dowagers wild to see him fooling round after me, instead of marrying their daughters! Then there's Colonel Devereux, and Lord Bertie Hastings, and all the rest of them. But most of them pall on me after a bit—and—and [*flushing a little*] you're the only one I ever had a *real*—fancy for, Gerald. And, as I tell you, if you do come back to the old country I shall be glad to see you! [*her voice breaks.*]

GERALD: You will, I hope, not think me brutal or ungrateful. But for both our sakes, believe me, it is better that this should be—good-bye!

LADY SNOWDON: [*with a fierce flash of anger in her dark Creole eyes.*] You have never really cared for me—or you would not speak like that.

GERALD: [*very gently.*] Is it not a question of self-respect?

LADY SNOWDON: [*brutally.*] Oh, keep your self-respect by all means—if you can. [GERALD flushes very painfully but is silent.] Oh, you think me coarse, no doubt? Maybe I am. But I'm, as I'm built. And as to you, Gerald—you [*savagely*] belong to a type of man whom a woman might love—and loathe!

[*They pass in silence from the room.*]

GERALD: Once more good-bye, Lady Snowdon. If

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I have seemed to speak unkindly I hope you will forgive me? Shall I [*as they approach the cab*] shall I tell the man to drive to Grosvenor Street?

LADY SNOWDON: Yes, or rather no. I shall get out at the Stanhope Gate and walk home from there. [*As the cab drives off Lady Snowdon leans back a moment, delicately wipes two tears from her eyes, dabs a little violet powder on her face, gives a little laugh and a little sigh, then looks down at the letters in her hand and murmurs:*] Humph, that's well over. I wouldn't do it again for a hundred dollars. It's good fun being a "respectable" English peeress, and it makes Anastasia v. Clams and all that lot, mad to read about me in the papers. Still, if I could really have cared for anyone—ever—I think it might have been for Gerald St. Olave. . . . Perhaps [*with a little mirthless laugh*] because he has never cared one pin's head about me! I guess most of us women are built that way, the men who *do* care for us look to us such prodigious fools, whilst as to the others—*[pauses a moment and raises her lorgnette]*. Why, on my word, if there isn't Doris Hampshire walking down Park Lane in a frock the very image of my new blue foulard! Mdme. Velours vowed she'd keep the pattern for me until after Goodwood. If she hasn't—won't I give it her! Just like Doris to have got hold of a thing like that. It's simplicity is its *chic*. And simplicity is all her *pôse*, just now. They say that down in the country, she has choir-boys to tea every Sunday, and teaches the village girls how to hem

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pocket-handkerchiefs ! Well, I surmise if you've so closely shaved the Divorce Court three times—it's pretty spry to affect choir-boys and school-children ? However, I hope she'll come to my *cotillon* on Thursday. There's no one in all London that is such a "draw." I suppose people find talking to her just like reading a naughty French novel bound up in an "S.P.C.K." cover ! Ah ! [as the hansom stops in a "block," and a good-humoured looking young man approaches] Ah ! there is Lord Cosmo Essendine!—Good morning, Lord Cosmo. How are you ? And can you tell me if your brother's in London ?

LORD COSMO : Kingsclere you mean ? No he's still down at Newmarket I think. Lucky dog ! that's where *I've* wanted to be all this week ; only beastly "duty" you know, kept me tied up here.

LADY SNOWDON : [laughing.] And you're the young man whom his regiment has nicknamed "England" because he "expects of every man to do *his* duty ! "

LORD COSMO : Awful libel I assure you, Lady Snowdon ; we all work like niggers in my battalion. Our new colonel—Stagholme, you know—is a capital sort, but [sighing], he's nuts on drill and that, keeps us all hard at it ! By the way, have you heard about his nephew, young St. Olave ? Bad business—isn't it ? The Colonel, and all the Stagholme lot, are fearfully cut up about it. Beastly thing for the family you see. I'm told the young chap's going off to Australia, or America—or somewhere.

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LADY SNOWDON: [*indifferently.*] Is he? Much the best thing he can do. England's very well rid of people like that. Good-bye, Lord Cosmo, [*as the hansom moves on*], and mind you don't forget my cotillon on Thursday.

LORD COSMO: [*muttering to himself in a perplexed tone, as he watches the cab disappear.*] Well, I always thought she'd rather a liking for young St. Olave. But she seemed awfully down on him. Well, women are a rum lot!

[*A short time later, LADY SNOWDON, returning home, encounters her husband upon the threshold; his private hansom is waiting at the door; and he, doubly withered and shrivelled-looking in the morning sunshine, but carefully padded and dyed, is preparing to enter it. He pauses on perceiving his wife, and enquires ceremoniously whether she can spare him a few moments? LADY SNOWDON nods briefly assent; and they enter the library together.*]

LORD SNOWDON: [*as soon as the door is closed.*] I tried to find you last evening, Dolorès, but I heard that you were at a ball. You will, however, doubtless have been told—since such tales travel apace—the news that I heard yesterday at the clubs? I mean about this enormous and disgraceful forgery perpetrated on the Australian millionaire, Carruthers—by Gerald St. Olave? At “White's” and at the “Marlborough,” people were talking of nothing else. Now I know this young St. Olave but slightly—and take no sort of interest in his proceedings. But I believe he has frequently been your guest in the past? And I wish you to under-

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stand that, in the future, I must absolutely and emphatically decline to allow him to enter my house.

LADY SNOWDON: [*leans her dark curled head listlessly against the carved chimney-piece, and says carelessly.*] You needn't put yourself out. I've already heard all about the affair, and as I was not born yesterday, I certainly do not propose to "placard" myself with a *declassé*. Although as to *your* pretending to decide—who—I shall, or shall not receive, that as you know, my dear Snowdon, is most outrageously absurd !

LORD SNOWDON: [*irritably.*] Why absurd ? Am I not your husband ?

LADY SNOWDON: I suppose so. We were "tied up" by two bishops and a dean, weren't we ? Still, you know, I don't intend to be "ballyragged" by anyone !

LORD SNOWDON: You prefer to express yourself like a fish-wife——

LADY SNOWDON: I prefer to make my meaning clear——

LORD SNOWDON; [*angrily.*] Well I prefer you to understand that I object, and I *decline*—to have my name associated with a scoundrel like this young St. Olave !

LADY SNOWDON: You're mighty particular all at once, aren't you ? Bah ! Why do you wear a mask with *me* ! Do you think that I am to be tricked by your "moral airs" any more than by your paddings or your paints ? Why can't you for once be honest—if such a thing be possible—and say that you object to

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having a man to your house who's done anything "queer" about money, simply because the world might sneer at you, though as to the "moral" of the thing, you don't care one flip !

LORD SNOWDON : What is this man to you ?

[LADY SNOWDON shrugs her shoulders indifferently.]

LORD SNOWDON : [with an assumption of injured dignity.]

If I thought this man *had* really been anything to you, I'd—[pauses uneasily, seeing his wife's glance fixed cynically upon him.]

LADY SNOWDON : [with sudden defiance.] Well, supposing—for the mere sake of argument—that he had been—a great deal to me—he, or another—or even a score of others. What then ? Would you sue for a divorce ? Those legal jackals are always on the prowl for pickings, and no doubt a "*séparation de corps et de biens*," is easily fixed up. I, [glancing round the well-furnished chamber.] I should certainly stay here. Our landlord knows I'm solvent. And you ? Well, I suppose you'd be making tracks for that rat-eaten, tumble-down old barn in North Wales, that you call Brancepeth Castle ? I surmise you'd pretty soon end your days up there ?

LORD SNOWDON : [fretfully.] You miserable purse-proud vixen ! I married you from out of a miners' camp, and because I am poor—you dare to insult me !

LADY SNOWDON : [with a sombre anger in her dark eyes.] Stop that, please, I guess we'd best not get reckoning insults, or maybe you'd come off but second-best !

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[LORD SNOWDON *quails a little beneath her glance. His wife continues bitterly.*]

When I say we'd best not get reckoning insults, you know well enough what I mean. You married me, you say, out of a miners' camp. Yes, but when I married you though I'd had my "larks," and such like, yet you know I was as sound of mind and body—as any of Lady Stagholme's, or Lady Chiselhurst's or any other of your English great folks' daughters. Well I married you for your name—and I'll not deny that either. And having married you, I try now to get the most that the world gives for such a bargain. But if I could have my youth—[she gives a little gasp.] my youth, and freshness back again, I take my dying oath, I'd leifer marry a Mexican from his swamps—or a cowboy from his clearin'—than a thing like *you*! [LORD SNOWDON raises his yellow wrinkled hands deprecatingly as though to stay the torrent of her words. But she continues fiercely.] Yes, I was sound of soul and body—and I married you. Ah! your eyes droop, I see you have at least some sense of shame.

LORD SNOWDON: [with a feeble querulousness.] I am old and ill. You have no right to taunt me with the—the past. Such scenes knock me up completely, and [with a watery smile.] I—I have an appointment to keep this morning. . . . It is unnecessary to summons the servants—but I am really quite done up! Dolorès, would you oblige me?—in that cabinet to your right—you will find I believe, a small phial, and a glass.

[LADY SNOWDON *disdainfully opens the cabinet, and pours*

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out some bright green liquid.] Absinthe! [she exclaims scornfully.] Ah! it has come to that!—

[*LORD SNOWDON drinks the spirit off thirstily. After a few moments his lack-lustre eyes begin to sparkle a little; and a slight flush creeps over his sallow cheeks.*]

LORD SNOWDON: [*more affably.*] Dolorès, my dear, you really should try some. [She makes a contemptuous gesture.] Ah! believe me, you are very unwise. It is simply invaluable for the health and spirits. [*Drinks again.*] It makes one feel twenty years younger. You refuse to try it? A thousand pities. But then after all you really need no renewal of youth. You are handsome, Dolorès, [*with a senile chuckle*] so *very* handsome. We have had our little “tiffs” at times—lover’s quarrels, no doubt—no doubt. But I have always said that you were very handsome, my dear, very handsome!

[*He lays his shrivelled fingers admiringly upon her hand, but she shrinks back as though a reptile had stung her.*]

LADY SNOWDON: [*coldly.*] I must leave you now. But I will send your valet to you. [*Sweeps out of the room.*]

LORD SNOWDON: [*muttering*] ‘Pon my soul a *de-vilish* handsome woman—but too easily upset. Mustn’t fall out with her. No—no. Brancepeth’s mortgaged down to its pettiest farm. Can’t go and live in that old rat-hole. London’s the place for me. How goes the merry German ballad?

“ Women, wine and song,
So runs the world along.”

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[Pours out some more Absinthe, then, rising, examines himself carefully in a mirror.] Not so young as I used to be. But was it not Zizi Zanoni who said yesterday that "ripened manhood" was worth all the world of foolish "lads' love"? She is right, [complacently] so very right. By the way—I must not be too late for her luncheon-party. As to Dolorès, she never interferes with me—so why should *I* interfere with her? It would be most unreasonable. The "jealous husband" now-a-days is never seen off the stage of the Opera Bouffes. Besides—I was always an easy-going fellow.

[Descends the stairway gaily humming an air from "*La Donna e mobile*." In the meanwhile his wife has passed into her boudoir, where she paces restlessly to and fro, her sole companions being a tiny Yorkshire terrier, fretful at its mistress' inattention, and a crimson-and-grey parrot hanging from its perch. After a few moments she throws herself down wearily upon a couch, muttering.]

There are moments when I could kill that man. O Gerald—Gerald! [and she takes up a miniature from the table beside her and gazes steadily at it.] Gerald, if my love for you be wrong, at least it has always seemed the purest instinct of my life! And now I have bidden you—Good-bye for always!

[At this moment she starts as a servant enters.]

SERVANT: Lady Hampshire has called, my lady. Is your ladyship at home?

LADY SNOWDON: (to servant.) Yes, show her up here. (to herself.) She has come, I suppose, about the

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Cotillon. Tragedy and comedy—O what a queer jumble is life! [A moment later.] Ah! my dear Doris, I've been worried to death over those *bonbonnières*, and now what do you advise?

LADY HAMPSHIRE: If you have not finally decided on the *bonbonnières*, I should certainly recommend the painted Watteau fans. You will find them charming. I had some at our own *Cotillon*. Frank Ricklands painted them expressly for me. They were simply perfect. *Petit Trianon* sort of idea you know. Little *poudrée* shepherdesses dancing a Court-Minuet with a real cow in the background. Well I am glad I came at such a critical moment. But I cannot stay, I am just on the way to Crunch End.

LADY SNOWDON: Where on earth is that?

LADY HAMPSHIRE: Crunch End, my dear, is a “faubourg” of East Tooting. I have promised to open a Bazaar there in aid of “The Charwomen’s Mutual Improvement Society.” Delightful people charwomen, so near to nature, you know—and not in the least bit *blasée*. Well, I must tear myself away. Could you by-the-bye let me have a violet *drâgée*? I have been smoking a cigarette and stupidly forgot to take any—disinfectant! And the “Lady Under-Sheriff” (at whose house I am lunching) disapproves of tobacco.

LADY SNOWDON: [laughingly offering a *bonbonnière*.] Doesn’t anyone smoke at Crunch End—not even your “Improved Charwomen”? By the way—is it you who improve them? or they, who improve you?

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LADY HAMPSHIRE : I'm not sure about that. But I know (helping herself to another *drâgée*) that the "Lady Under-Sheriff" still wears flannel underclothing, and considers cigarette smoking *anathema*.

LADY SNOWDON : Then she should disapprove of you?

LADY HAMPSHIRE : [*placidly.*] On the contrary she has quite a regard for me—there—that is *la vérité vrai!*

[*At this moment a shrill mocking cry is heard from the further side of the room.*]

"*La vérité vrai!—la vérité vrai!*

O what a queer jumble is life."

LADY SNOWDON : [*with some annoyance.*] That bird is always catching up bits of phrases; it is too unbearably noisy! I must really send it downstairs!

[*But the bird undaunted by this threat continues to shriek.*]

"*La vérité vrai!—la vérité vrai!*

O what a queer jumble is life!"

SCENE III.

SCENE. *Gum-tree Creek. A few years later.*

PRESENT.

BERKELEY WENTWORTH and RAKES DOOLAN, *an Irish-American horse-dealer, who has ridden over to negotiate the purchase of some young horses. They are sitting smoking on the verandah.*

BERKELEY WENTWORTH : Well then—price being agreed on—the matter stands thus: Black Mike and one of the other "boys," shall ride over to your place to-morrow with the two colts "Jasper" and "Gem"?

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RAKES DOOLAN: Yes, that's fixed so. But about that other colt you were speaking of—I don't [*cautiously*] want to *buy* any more at present—but I might as well just take a look at it. By the way, how did you say it was bred?

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: The chestnut three-year old is by "Fiery" out of my mare "Empress." We call her "Fire-Queen." She is good-looking, and a very free goer.

RAKES DOOLAN: Vicious?

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: I don't fancy so. She's not up to my weight. But my young manager thinks very well of her. Would you like to come down now and have a look at her? I believe they are "lunging" her over the fences down in the clearing.

[*They presently discover BLACK MIKE vainly endeavouring to get the chestnut over a fair-sized made fence of furze and—aloe spikes, which is fixed at one angle of the clearing. Three times BLACK MIKE gallops the mare up to the fence, and each time she—at the last moment, suddenly swerves, and plunging violently, almost throws him. The man looks furious; the veins on his forehead are swollen, and his muscular hands clench themselves fiercely upon his riding-whip, as he cuts the mare sharply across the head, making her plunge yet the more wildly.]*

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: [frowning.] What's wrong with the mare this morning? She went over that fence yesterday like a bird.

BLACK MIKE: [sullenly.] Hanged if I can tell, boss.

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For all I know twenty devils seem to have got into the darned brute. O you would—would you! *jibbing the mare's mouth savagely as she begins to buck.* At this moment GERALD ST. OLAVE, dressed in a loose red shirt and long riding boots, joins the group. His fair skin is flushed with the heat, but he looks healthy and sunburnt.]

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: [to GERALD.] Mr. Doolan here, wanted to see the chestnut-mare put through her paces. But so far we haven't been able to show him much, and I'm afraid his idea is that she's vicious.

GERALD: Not the least in the world, Mr. Doolan. I assure you [*shaking hands with the horse-dealer*] that there's not a grain of vice in the mare's whole composition. She's a bit nervous, I'll allow, but then so many of those well-bred bright chestnuts are that—and take her all round she's a little beauty. Do you [*turning to BERKELEY WENTWORTH*] wish me to try her over the fence? [BERKELEY WENTWORTH nods, and signs to BLACK MIKE to dismount, which he does with no very good grace. GERALD vaults lightly into the high-peaked Mexican saddle. The mare plunges a little at first; but presently as GERALD smooths her neck and speaks caressingly to her she grows quieter.] I think I'll take her for a canter just round the clearing so as to let her settle down a bit, and then we'll have a try at the fence. [He gives the mare her head. She darts at first madly forwards and rears, then feeling no violent check at her mouth settles down into a more even stride, till presently her rather irregular gallop subsides into a long, swinging canter. Steadying her skilfully, without checking her, GERALD guides

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her right round the clearing until they once more near the fence, when, with a slight pressure of his knees he quickens the pace, takes her quite straight at the fence, and drawing the reins quickly through his fingers lands her safely on the further side.]

RAKES DOOLAN: [to BERKELEY WENTWORTH.] How well your young manager rides. I wish [sighing] that any of my "boys" had anything like such good hands. They're well enough for sticking on. There's hardly a buck-jumper in the whole country that my boy, "Long Sandy" as they call him, couldn't stick to, and he can break a mustang with the best. But its hands they all want—hands. They're a sight too fond of curses and cowhide. And they don't seem able to get "on terms" with a horse like you're man yonder. By the way [speculatively] Mr. St. Olave hasn't quite the look of most of the boys round here. I suppose he's not always been used to this kind of life?

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: [rather curily.] He earns his keep, and makes me a very good manager, that's all I'm concerned with. Won't you come back, Mr. Doolan, and have another pipe, before you go home?

[*A few minutes after RAKES DOOLAN has taken his departure GERALD enters the house.*]

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: Doolan's bought "Jasper" and "Gem" outright, and he seems a good deal bitten with the "Fire-Queen."

GERALD: Well, for my part, I shall really be quite sorry when the day comes to part with "the Queen."

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Although of course it will be all the better financially.

[*GERALD meanwhile has seated himself at the table and is helping himself to some food and drink.*]

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: [*leisurely knocking the ashes out of his pipe.*] Well, I've finished my noon-day "easy"—so I think I'll be off, and see what they're doing down in the maize-fields.

GERALD: Can you wait a moment for me? I'll just have another bit of this smoked-meat and another go at the pulque *—and then I'll come with you.

BERKELEY WENTWORTH: All right. No special hurry. You'd better have a smoke and a drink, whilst I go round and see about that harness-tackle I want altered—Ah! by the way, that reminds me, one of the "boys" rode into Juarez this morning to see about this harness, and he brought out the mails. I think [*pointing to a side table*] there are some letters for you! GERALD takes letter-packet and glances over it.] Quite a large mail [*he mutters to himself*]. One from Mother, one from Enid, one from Mumps, and one from Leslie Buckstone—that's to say how the book's going I suppose? [*Reads Lady Clarice's letter first twice through, then mutters :*] Dear Mother—she's never once missed a mail since I've been out here. How pleased she is about my book; says Leslie Buckstone has been to see her, and she likes him so very much both for my sake, and for his own.

* A fermented drink made from the Mexican aloe, and which is the usual wine of the country.

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Good old Buckles—well, she's not far out there. He's a brick! I don't know another chap in the world who'd have taken all the trouble he has to see another man's book through the press, and to give it a good chance. Now let's see what Enid has to say [*reads as follows*:]

“ ST. OLAVE COURT,

“ NORTH DEVONSHIRE.

“ DEAREST GERALD,

“ I have just been reading your book, and I cannot tell you how much it has impressed me.

“ What wonderful, beautiful thoughts must have come to you in those far away wilds, where you describe yourself as ‘digging and delving and breaking beasts far nobler than yourself.’

“ When do all your marvellous thoughts come to you? I think it must be during the wonderful starlit nights you write of in your book? It seems so hard not to be able to tell everyone that *you* are ‘John Jerningham’—but some day you will reveal yourself, dear boy, will you not? You will already have heard of Leo's operation, and how splendidly it succeeded. The doctors are most hopeful about him, and say they see no reason why he should not be able in a few months' time, to walk almost without crutches; but of course he will have to be very careful at first. He is away now with Mother at Breezeford for some time. The house seems rather desolate except that grandmamma is here, which (in one sense) always makes things lively. . . . The little, nervous Low Church curate, called here last

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week to ask about some church decorations, and grandmamma fell upon him and attacked him about his uncanonical vestments, and the general lack of ‘proper ritual’ in his services. The poor little man fled, ‘routed,’ as father said, ‘with heavy slaughter,’ and has ever since I believe lain in hiding! As to the parish generally, grandmamma has also taken that firmly in hand. The ‘Devonshire yokel,’ is, as you know, not easily aroused—nor is his ‘missus’ of a very ‘neurotic’ temperament. Still, when grandmamma *will* inform the mother of nine, that ‘she no more understands baby-nursing than the man in the moon,’ this does arouse some local indignation? Our Ancestress, however, is, as you know not easily deterred, and once, having taken the village firmly in hand, she has no intention of letting it be good—or even happy—in its own way. She delivers lurid little pamphlets to all our most reputable retainers, depicting the hideous consequences which must ensue from their indulgence in that ‘*just one*’ glass of beer. The Ladies’ Committee of the Dorcas Society have—after two flying visits from grandmamma—formally declared that they ‘owe it to themselves’ temporarily to disband! Whilst old MacDougal protests in broadest Scotch, that she has worked such havoc in ‘his green-houses,’ that nothing but ‘regard for her ladyship,’ would induce him to stay on another week! As to Mumps—she and the Ancestress keep up a continual guerilla warfare, most harassing to their unhappy surroundings. To ‘reform’ Mumps, and

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to satisfactorily ‘settle’ me, is the cherished project of her heart. But since no one excepting Mother has ever been able to keep Mumps in order; and as my ideas as to matrimony, and those of the Ancestress, do not in the remotest degree tally, I think she must find her self-imposed task rather uphill work.

“ How exasperating it is to be continually interfered with and cross-questioned as to one’s likes and dislikes! To be asked *why* one does not care for ‘systematic and useful occupations,’ and *why* one does not desire to pervade cottages and distribute leaflets? And *why* it is not one’s ideal to have a home of one’s own, and to be permanently ‘settled’? Did not Laurence Oliphant once say, that the ‘worldly holy’ person was far more exasperating than the ‘wholly worldly’ one? How true that is! All this sort of discussion makes life seem so inharmonious and so far removed from one’s idea of the beautiful; all day-dreams vanish before it, and leave one shivering and leaden-souled amidst the things which seem merely squalid. I should like to live as did Tennyson’s beautiful ‘Princess Ida’ in a world

“ Of science, and the secrets of the mind :
Musician, painter, sculptor, more of those rare souls ;
Poets, whose thoughts enrich the life-blood of the world.”

—a world where discords were shut out, and all the unloveliness of life could be forgotten. Gerald! how much I wish you were at home. This is, I think, the loveliest season of the year, when all the promise of spring has passed into the fulness of the summer-

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time. All the day long when I can be free, I wander over our dear wide, heathery Exmoor, where the breezes are always fresh with the salt-spray, and the stone-pines and the gorses listen all day to the song which the sea sings them. That song, to transcribe which into the great colour-tongue must be alike the desire, and the despair of every artist! At other times—in other moods—I wander through the leafy garden-ways, and dream and dream! How Nature speaks to those who will but heed and hear her. Beneath the shadows of the dear old ilex-trees, the birds flute softly, and the bees hum drowsily. Sometimes, hour long, I sit by the grey sundial down in the bowling-alley—where we best loved to play as children—and dream of those past hours, and wonder what the future, which lies hidden in ‘the lap of the gods’ may hold for each of us! Ah me! what wondrous ‘sermons in stones’ that old sundial might preach, if it so willed! And could it, I wonder, have a fitter audience than the flowers which cluster fair and self-sown at its base? The basil plant of hatred; and the white violet of love. The rosemary for remembrance; and the rue for tears. The foxglove for sincerity; and the myosotis for devotion. The white may-flower which tells of a bridal; and the pale asphodel which means—death! Dear Gerald, my pen runs on. But for the present I must say *lebe-wohl!* Remember to write soon, and often to

“ Your ever loving sister,
“ ENID ST. OLAVE.”

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GERALD : [musingly.] Enid seems to have reached a phase I once passed through. A phase of idealism which is perhaps too fantastic to be really true to either life or art. Poor dear little soul ! I pray heaven that her awakening to the brutal realities of life be not as harsh as was my own ! . . . Now let see us what Mumps has to say for herself. [Deciphers slowly as follows :]

“ MY DEAREST OLD JERRY,

“ I've been going to write to you for ages, but something always happened, and Uncle Stagholme's boys, Rex and Aubrey, have been staying here for the Easter holidays, and it takes a lot of time fielding for them at cricket. They won't let me bowl, because they say I can't bowl overhand properly, but fielding takes just as much time—and it's hotter on the whole. Rex thinks I'm getting quite a decent longstop for a girl. They rode fat Jumbo when they were here, and Aubrey made him jump the ha-ha down at the end of the paddock, and didn't he just kick when he got the other side ! Then one day we had an otter hunt down by the Stepleton Marshes—that was grand. The boys have gone back to Eton now, and I miss them awfully, and Fräulein's come back from Germany, and she says that holidays are ‘demoralising.’ I can't see that myself. Fräulein says, too, that no lady really cares for bird-nesting, and always much prefers ‘house-occupations.’ She says her kinswoman's niece (the one

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who has always been so ‘well conducted’) was only last month married to the Burgomaster’s son, in white satin and cornflowers, and this should be an example for me to live up to. But as I don’t want to marry the Burgomaster’s son, I see no point for me—in fact I never mean to marry anyone, it would be much too worrying. And if you like when I get older—if Mother can spare me—I’ll come and keep house with you and Mr. Wentworth. I like what I hear of life out there, *perticularly*, and I think it would just suit me. It must be grand fun lassoing mustangs. I suppose you do a lot of that? Rex had a book about ranch life the other day, and we thought of you, and tried lassoing some of the shorthorns in the park. But it didn’t quite come off, and old Vancox made such a fuss, although having been bailiff such a number of years you’d have thought he’d have been interested.

“Enid is very well, and so are the young retrievers and so is grandmamma, who has also been staying here for a fortnight past. She says she is superintending things for Mother whilst she’s away with Leo. I don’t know if its superintendingness, or what, but she seems all over the place at once, so that a person can never be sure of her for two minutes together. Father goes out to the County Council a great deal (I suppose he had enough of her superintendingness when he was a boy), and Enid is always painting *distant* views of the Court. And I have the worst of her, for she says she takes the greatest interest in my education, and is

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always overhauling my copy books. Only yesterday, she made such a fuss because I had translated *je suis blessé* as 'I am blest,' and after all, that's a thing that might happen to *anyone*, I should think. Then, too, she makes me read Milton aloud. I believe she chooses him simply because of his horrid long words. I hate a person who can't express himself without using four-barrelled words. It's not *my* idea of good English. Sometimes she seems to doze whilst I'm reading. But it's a *dreadfully* deceiving sort of sleep, for the minute I stop, she wakes up, and cries out 'Do read that canto again, Muriel. It's so extremely musical.' Dear old Jerry, *when* are you coming home? There's a late jackdaw's nest in the ivy in the clock-tower, and one can see the young ones peering out (sometimes they have quite a strong look of grandmamma), still, I should like one very much. Anyone could get to them quite *easily* by creeping along the eaves, and just dropping over the gables—but I've promised Mother not to try, as she's a kind of idea it might be dangerous. But if the gardener's boy can reach them with a ladder, I'll be sure and keep one for you. Good-bye, Jerry boy. *Heaps* of love and *lots* of kisses from

"Your loving sister,

"MUMPS."

GERALD: [*laughing to himself.*] Dear old Mumps, her epistolary style is quite unique—and how all she says seems to bring back old times! It makes me feel as though I were at home again. As if the indiarubber

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trees and fan-palms over there, were really the oaks and ilexes of the Court, and as if the blue-jays on the aloe-fence were the jackdaws in the ivy ! [calls out to BERKELEY WENTWORTH] I'm quite ready to start for the maize-fields, Wentworth—hope I haven't kept you waiting ?

[They ride away together.]

GERALD : [drawing a paper from his breast, and handing it to BERKELEY WENTWORTH.] By the way , last night I drew out a rough plan for the irrigation of that " clearing " down by East Point. The rains will, I suppose, be coming on in another fortnight. If we are to get the canal at all into working order this year, I think we should soon begin ?

BERKELEY WENTWORTH : [meditatively.] Yes. A fortnight's none too much time for the job—as it is, I think we shall need some more " hands."

GERALD : Shall I ride on to Blue Rocks after we have been to the maize-fields, and make some enquiries as to what hands we could get ?

BERKELEY WENTWORTH : Humph—it's a good thirty miles on to Blue Rocks and back—still, if you and your beast feel fit for it—

GERALD : Oh ! my beast will take no harm if he gets a feed and a rest in between whiles, and as to myself, well [laughing], you know I didn't come out here to eat the bread of idleness. [They continue to discuss the details of the irrigation scheme; and a short time later GERALD having quitted BERKELEY WENTWORTH canters away in the direction of Blue Rocks. It is nightfall by the time he has

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executed his commission, and as he rides slowly home across the broad stretch of the maize-fields, he takes out LESLIE BUCKSTONE'S letter, and re-reads it by the clear moonlight.]

[*To himself.*] So he thinks my book has been the success of the year! [Reads extract from letter.] “The publishers tell me they are sending you a big cheque “by next mail, and that the negotiations for translating “the work into German and French are well nigh completed. I congratulate you, old man, on such a big “success. And I heartily wish you were here to “enjoy it. On my word I think you make a mistake “in continuing to conceal your identity. I know past “worries and troubles make you feel out of tune with “English life. But remember you are *John Jerningham* “now—and no longer Gerald St. Olave. Forgive my “taking a friend's prerogative and speaking so bluntly. “But honestly I think you do your talent injustice by “burying yourself in a ‘cow-boy's’ existence, even “though, as you say, Berkeley Wentworth be the “prince of good fellows, and you are happy in your “simple out-of-door life. Happiness is after all, but a “relative term, and for my part I believe few writers “are intellectually at their best when severed from the “wholesome contact of the world of their fellow “thinkers. Moreover, he who has won the literary “‘wreath of wild olive' assuredly deserves to wear it!” . . . [*Gerald's face grows momentarily pale as he reads this sentence, and a wistful shadow darkens his blue eyes.*] He means it kindly [he mutters]. But, oh, it is

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almost cruel to speak to me of such a lost paradise ! My boyish dreams of the literary "wreath of wild olive" have fulfilled themselves. But it has been truly said that the fulfilment of such dreams comes to all lives—either too early or too late. To me it has come too late ! Here, I am, at least as regards my own personality, by the world forgotten. Let me, save in my work, also forget the world. In these solitudes at least I have found peace to soul and sense ; health of mind and body. It would be madness to forego it, for the sake of the plaudits of a crowd which once cursed my very name. My father [*and a bitter smile comes on his lips*] deems that I have defamed and dishonoured an honest name, he shall never undergo "the disgrace" of having my memory revived ! Moreover [*and a gentler look comes over his face*] would not my tainted fame detract from the best teachings of my work ? If my work, has—as they say—done the world good—so it is well. The author must learn to live impersonally in his works ; to die to all personal aims and desires. Yes, this is the highest, and the best. And yet it is—Ah ! God, so hard !

SCENE IV.

SCENE. *The grass terrace outside St. Olave Court.*
LADY CLARICE and ENID are sitting under the cedar tree.
ENID is sketching. LADY CLARICE has a book on her knee.
MUMPS is lying in a hammock at a little distance with her eyes closed.

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ENID: [speaking in a low tone.] Mother, is not this affair about Irene Beauchamp terrible?

LADY CLARICE: Yes, poor child. I am afraid that in one way she has ruined her life.

ENID: Colonel Devereux was certainly always very pleasant. But I wonder why they had him so perpetually at the Abbey?

LADY CLARICE: I suppose Lord Amersham liked him; and that Lady Amersham saw no special danger in his intimacy with the girls. To begin with, he is a married man, and secondly he is twice the age of either Irene or Viola.

ENID: Lady Amersham always treated both the girls—in some respects—as though they were still in pinafores. At the same time she (quite illogically I think) expected them to know how to attract and marry some *parti*. Poor Irene! being thrown as she was, at the head of every “marriageable” man in London used to drive her *simply wild*. I think she first became really intimate with Colonel Devereux because she felt on comfortable terms with him.

LADY CLARICE: That may be an explanation, but I am afraid it is scarcely a justification of her conduct. However, we need not condemn her. The world will be ready enough to do that.

ENID: Yes. It all seems such a cruel shame. He, I am sure, is far more to blame than she.

LADY CLARICE: He has certainly behaved disgracefully. He has rewarded the Amershams’ hospitality

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by practically ruining their daughter. And moreover he has injured his own wife and children.

ENID : But his wife they say is quite ready to condone everything—provided that he will return to her. So it seems that in the long run Irene will be the only sufferer ?

LADY CLARICE : No, Victor Devereux will certainly also suffer in losing the good opinion of all his friends. Still, before the world's *vehmgericht* it is usually the unfortunate woman who ultimately pays by far the most heavily.

ENID : [pitifully.] Poor Irene !

MUMPS : [suddenly breaking in.] You are talking of Irene Beauchamp ? Well, I think she's horrid !

ENID : [starting.] Mumps, I thought you were asleep ! It is very dishonourable to pretend to be asleep, and to listen to other people's conversation.

MUMPS : [indignantly.] I was asleep—sound as a top. Only a mosquito stung my nose and that woke me up. And I heard Irene's name and thought I'd just mention my opinion.

ENID : [severely.] Little girls should be seen, and not heard.

MUMPS : Oh, I daresay ! But you only say that because you are a few years older, and—

LADY CLARICE : [interposing.] Say what you wish, Mumps, but do not be captious. You know how much I dislike any "wrangling."

MUMPS : I'm sorry, Mother, and I only meant to say,

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that I've never had any opinion of Irene Beauchamp since that day last holidays, when Rex told me what awful crammers she'd told about—well, something. Rex thinks that in a general sort of way girls have very little idea of being as "square" as boys. But he doesn't blame them altogether. He says it's probably because when they're young, they don't get proper principles spanked into them.

LADY CLARICE: My dear child, what a dreadful expression—and idea!

MUMPS: [continuing.] Rex quite thinks this—and he's in the sixth form now. Perhaps [meditatively] if Irene had had proper principles spanked into her earlyish, she might have turned out better. Although [impartially] Rex says quite the same about me at times. And really I shouldn't say *I* had turned out so very badly, should you?

LADY CLARICE: I believe—at least I hope—that you have some rudimentary notions of "proper principles," although I am not aware of ever having what you are pleased to term "spanked" them into you! As to Rex, when he is older, he will probably hold less drastic views.

MUMPS: Ah! yes. I often tell him that boys have no principles, except those that are whacked into them, whilst girls have a whole heap of natural principles—as you may say.

LADY CLARICE: I wonder what Lindley Murray would say to your grammar, Mumps?

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MUMPS: But you think Rex is wrong, don't you, Mother?

LADY CLARICE: Well, dear, his views at present seem somewhat to resemble those of the old lady who lived in a shoe, and who, when confronted with any family difficulty, just "whipped her children all soundly and sent them to bed." That is not perhaps the highest ideal of education.

MUMPS: [*after a meditative pause.*] By the way, talking of education, Mother—you won't let me go to a French convent, will you?

LADY CLARICE: To a French convent?

MUMPS: Yes. Grandmamma said it would be an excellent thing. But I know I should perfectly loathe being boxed up with a lot of French girls, who couldn't play a decent game of rounders to save their lives—and with a troupe of poking, prying French nuns!

LADY CLARICE: Well, as to sending you to a French convent——[*pauses*].

MUMPS: [*reproachfully.*] You're *not* going to say it would be a good thing?

LADY CLARICE: [*laughing.*] No, I was only going to say that it would really be rather too hard on the poor nuns!

MUMPS: [*meditatively.*] Well, I daresay—now you mention it—I should make them sit up a bit!

LADY CLARICE: More slang! Mumps, what about your promise to try and keep to the Queen's English?

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However, it is nearly five o'clock, and Fräulein will be expecting you, so you had better go indoors and make yourself tidy for tea.

MUMPS: [with some surprise.] Is my hair rumpled?

LADY CLARICE: It looks like a tangled yellow mop!

MUMPS: Well, I'm particularly comfortable under these trees, still [*affably*] of course if you make such a point of it——[rises and departs].

ENID: [seriously.] Mother, I am haunted with memories of poor Irene; I feel I might have done more for her. But I *did* try. One day I said to her: "Irene, what a curious change has come over you of late. Have you anything on your mind?" And she answered, "I am the most wretched woman on earth! I hate myself, and I hate my life! . . . But I can alter neither. Do not ask me any more!" . . . I tried to offer her sympathy, but she would not heed me. At last I said: "Irene, you have turned against all your old friends, and it seems to me that you are only happy in Colonel Devereux's society." She grew very red, then very white—then abruptly left the room. I saw the subject was an unfortunate one and so did not mention it again. But perhaps I should have said more?

LADY CLARICE: It certainly was a difficult position for you, and I suppose you had no idea there was anything definitely wrong?

ENID: No. But I used to feel vaguely uneasy when I saw the strange and subtle influence which Colonel Devereux exercised over Irene. Directly he entered

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a room her whole aspect changed. She used to look half dazed-and-half ashamed, yet at the same time she seemed wholly drawn towards him. Irene, as you know, was totally ignorant of psychology or any like science, and therefore if—as I have sometimes imagined—he exercised a kind of mesmeric influence over her, she would have had but little chance of withstanding it?

LADY CLARICE: [*musingly.*] Victor Devereux has always been said to possess a curious magnetic attraction for women. This is almost the only way in which it seems possible to account for a girl like Irene losing all sense of the "fitness" of things. She has no doubt a somewhat weak will, combined with a strong emotional nature, which together with an utter ignorance of the world, would place her at a disadvantage with any unscrupulous man.

ENID: Of course after what had taken place, it was terrible for Irene to remain at the Abbey. And one can well understand that sooner than face discovery she would at once seek the protection of the man she loved. Poor girl, I had a letter from her this morning. She is very unhappy. This is what she says:— [ENID reads.]

"It was good of you, my dearest friend, and like you "too, to write to me in all my trouble. An hour of "madness has turned the whole world against me, and "I am utterly alone—alone with the worst loneliness "that can befall a human being, that of being every-

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“where—unwanted! As you will have heard, I came
“to Paris when I realised what lay before me. . . .
“I went to Victor Devereux at first. He was kind—
“or at least he intended to be kind. But I felt that
“my presence was an embarrassment to him. I did
“not stay with him long, and now have left him.
“What the future will bring to me and to my child,
“I cannot tell! My parents write me word that it will
“be impossible for me ever to return to the Abbey.
“My mother says that she must consider the welfare
“of Viola and of the rest—and my father tells me he
“will allow me enough to live on provided that I will
“permanently sever my connection with Colonel
“Devereux, and never seek to communicate with
“my family. I have no option but to consent to
“this. If Victor had really cared for *me*, as I have
“cared for *him*, I should, for his sake, have deemed
“the world well lost! But his love is not like my
“love. I see this with a terrible clearness. . . .

“Good-bye, Enid. We have always been like sisters,
“you and I—but from henceforth your life-path and mine
“must always lie apart. Mine must be through the
“shadowland; may yours be through the sunlight!

“Like Hagar of old I must go forth into the desert.
“As a woman I have sinned; as a woman I am
“shamed; and as a woman I must—suffer!—IRENE.”

ENID: You see, Mother, how broken-hearted she is.
It is pitiful to think of poor Irene out there all alone,
ill, forsaken and forlorn! And then too, everyone is so

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cruel about her. The other day at the flower-show, I heard several people speaking about her. Lady Snowdon—that hateful American woman, who stays so much at Glastonbury—was there, and she spoke of poor Irene as though she were a kind of moral leper. I tried to defend Irene. And she turned to me and said with a sort of sneer, “I’m sure Irene Beauchamp is very lucky to possess such an enthusiastic champion. But I can’t personally feel any sympathy for a baggage like that!” There was a general silence after this remark, then someone—I think it was Lord Cosmo—changed the conversation, but later on the old Duchess came up to me in her fat, ponderous sort of way, and said, “My dear, your charming mother is not here to-day, or of course I should not take it upon myself to say this; but really if I were you, I would not undertake to defend Irene Beauchamp. I know you mean it well. But it never sounds *quite* nice for a girl to try and justify—a moral lapse. Besides, it creates unpleasantness.” “I am sorry,” I said, “if I was rude to any of your guests. But I was only thinking of poor Irene’s misery.” “You were only a little unwise,” she answered. “You were not rude to anyone. And though Lady Snowdon *is* my guest, I am bound to say that she showed a lamentable lack of good taste in dragging in this unhappy family affair of the poor dear Amershams before a whole tentful of ‘outsiders.’ As to you, my dear, you must not mind my little hint of caution, for you know that I have a very real and special interest in your

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welfare. And I have lived too many years in the world not to know how easily quixotism may be misconstrued." Mother, you don't agree with what she said, do you ?

LADY CLARICE : I certainly do agree that "quixotism" is usually misconstrued by the world. Still on the other hand I think that the quixotism of nineteen is hardly [*smiling*] likely to blight a whole after career ! But to return to Irene—let us try and think of some practical way of helping her.

ENID : Will you write to her ?

LADY CLARICE : Yes, if you think it will be of any comfort to her. And I will at the same time try and find out if there is anything that we can do for her, or anyone in Paris who may be likely to help her in her hour of need.

ENID : Could you not soften the hearts of her family towards her ?

LADY CLARICE : It is never very judicious to interfere unasked in people's family affairs. Still if an opportunity arises of discussing matters with her parents, I will of course try and do my uttermost for the poor child.

[*A pause.*]

ENID : Mother, must you go away again on Tuesday ?

LADY CLARICE : Yes, dear, I promised Leo to be back by then.

ENID : But surely his nurse is very reliable ?

LADY CLARICE : She is a most excellent woman, still Leo needs more companionship now that he is getting

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better. As you know, he rarely complains, still in his weak state he should not be too much alone.

ENID: [*rather petulantly.*] Well, Mother, I wish you'd both come back soon for good. Things have been simply at sixes and sevens all this past month. As to grandmamma [*stops significantly, then adds*], you don't like one to say things against grandmamma, I know—but really she's dreadfully difficult to live with. Now last week, Lord Kingsclere—[*hesitates.*]

LADY CLARICE: Well——?

ENID: Well—he was over here nearly every day, and that was entirely grandmamma's doing. I never invited him. Nor did Father. But she always found some reason for him to ride over. And then on some pretext or other, she used to leave us together. Oh! [*flushing hotly*], how I loathed those hours . . . and the day he asked me to marry him. That was worst of all. . . . I was painting under the elders and ilexes down by the lake. And I thought that day at least, I had escaped him, but he rode over in the afternoon with a note from the old duchess to grandmamma. And when he had given her the note he walked—so he told me—all over the garden, until he found me. And then—oh! it was horrible—he asked me to marry him. He [*with a little shiver*] took my hand, and that made me feel sick and cold. . . . And I told him I *never*, never could marry him. And begged him to go away at once. But I thought I should never be rid of him. He seemed to have so *dreadfully* much to say. At last he said he

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would go away if I wished it, but that I must think the whole matter over quietly, and let him come again and talk to me about it, and that some day he hoped I might grow to like him better. Then he went.

LADY CLARICE: And you—what did you do, my poor child?

ENID: I went home and cried, and wanted you, Mother. I had a horror of him. I had a horror of myself—a horror of all the world. I felt degraded because his hateful hands had touched me. And because—because he could think that I would marry him. He might [indignantly] have seen how I loathed him, and how I had always tried to avoid him.

LADY CLARICE: I understand your feeling. Still you must do him the justice to believe that he probably did not fully realise your antipathy to him.

ENID: He certainly seemed surprised at my refusal. I think grandmamma had given him to understand that I did not actually *dislike* him. And then you see she was always trying to throw us together. She thought it would be “a good thing.”

LADY CLARICE: Still you must not blame her. From her own point of view she meant to act for the best.

ENID: [rather cynically.] She meant me to be Duchess of Glastonbury some day, I suppose! But I'd rather end my days in the workhouse. Think of the horror, the shame, the degradation of being the wife of a man one loathed. I cannot [pensively] understand the point of view of people like grandmamma? They tell

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one that marriage is a "holy sacrament," that the marriage service is a "sacred obligation," and yet they think that one can stand before the altar, and vow to "love, honour and obey" a man like Ronald Kingsclere. For my part [*impetuously*] I think that the women who sell themselves for diamonds, a name, an income, are far worse than the poor hungry outcasts in the streets!

LADY CLARICE: [*tolerantly*.] One must learn not to condemn people wholesale. Many women when they marry barely realise what they are doing, and afterwards bravely try to make the best of a bad bargain. [*Very gently*.] As to you, dear Enid, you live in a world of day-dreams, which no doubt has its own beauty, but which—since we are speaking so frankly—does not tend to make anyone universally sympathetic.

ENID: Yes, I know that I am not "universally sympathetic." If people bore me, or weary me, or if I think their natures are squalid, I simply pass them by.

LADY CLARICE: Dear child, that is a very effortless way of cutting life's Gordian knots. But do you think that it is a very right one?

ENID: [*dreamily*.] The ideal world is so beautiful. The real world so unlovely. The one is like a silver-point etching; the other like a flaring chromo.

LADY CLARICE: You make me think of the Eastern proverb, which says: "That though we gaze upon the stars, yet our feet should never crush the glow-worms!"

ENID: But human glow-worms are so unlovely!

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LADY CLARICE: [*pointing to the volume on her knee.*] This book teaches a higher point of view than that.

ENID: Ah! you are reading Gerald's book. Yes, it is full of beautiful, wonderful thoughts. If only [*rather petulantly*] he had not asked us to conceal his identity! People have been so cruel about him, poor boy; and when I hear them praising "John Jerningham's" book and saying that it has "marked a literary era," and so on, it seems so hard not to be able to tell them who wrote it.

LADY CLARICE: I wish he would allow me to tell his father, and one or two of his old friends. Still, I suppose you and I must continue to respect his wishes as faithfully as Leslie Buckstone and the publishers have done.

ENID: Do you think he will ever reveal himself?

LADY CLARICE: I cannot tell. He is very sensitive, poor boy, about what is past.

ENID: But his genius could not now be denied?

LADY CLARICE: No. But he thinks that what some would hold to be his tainted fame might detract from the higher teachings of his work. You see he aspires to more than the Delphic laurels. He wishes to benefit his age.

ENID: That is, after all, a splendid impulse. I wonder [*musingly*] whether if Gerald had not had all this trouble he would ever have produced such fine work?

LADY CLARICE: I greatly doubt it. His work had always some of the picturesque brilliancy of art. But

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his nature was almost too facile ; his talent too carelessly prodigal to have risen to its true heights from out any lotus-eating existence. The roses and lilies of life, despite their sweetness, oftentimes steal and sap the life-blood from the artist's soul, and leave his work as brilliant-hued, yet bloodless as some stove-forced plant. It was the tempest and the sea-blast which in the old dead days transformed men into Vikings. And it has been said that the world of art holds likewise its Vikings ; great because they have suffered ; strong because they have striven ; noble because they have—endured !

ENID : And you think it has been thus with Gerald ?

LADY CLARICE : Yes. I think the record of his life has written itself as in letters of fire upon his works. His works are veritable human documents. In the first we had the grace and glamour of a poet's paradise, yet a paradise wherein the serpent's deathly trail, has stained the sweetest blossoms and fouled the fairest fruits ! In the second we can recognise the impress of the rough hard life passed upon solitary wind-swept plains. There rarely comes a crown without a cross. Gerald has had his cross. Perhaps to one of his temperament the severance from the luxuries and allurements of cities, the harshness of the world's condemnation, may have proved a heavier cross than any will ever dream ! Still this very Calvary of pain has given him pause to raise and purify his thoughts and to look into the depths of his own soul. And from out this bodily and mental struggle he surely has risen

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a conqueror, and in crucifying self, has likewise conquered the world.

ENID: Yes. I suppose that all great works are wrought out in anguish. Still one would be glad for Gerald to have a little of the meed of honour he deserves. By the way, is not his friend, Mr. Buckstone, coming down here this afternoon?

LADY CLARICE: Yes. He should be here by now. I think we can hardly thank him enough for all that he has done for Gerald.

ENID: [meditatively.] Leslie Buckstone has, of course, being very good to Gerald, still he always seems to me to take life far too carelessly.

LADY CLARICE: My dear Enid, everybody does not take life at *all* times and seasons quite as seriously as you do. But then [*smiling*] you see you are only nineteen. And someone has said that it is "very difficult to be young up to the age of thirty!" So as Leslie Buckstone is quite twenty years your senior you really must be lenient towards his optimism! [LESLIE BUCKSTONE is now seen approaching across the lawn. LADY CLARICE and ENID go forward to meet him.]

LADY CLARICE: It is so good of you to spare the time to run down and give us a "week end." I hope you are prepared to put up with a very reduced family party! Come and have some tea.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Thanks, it would be very "grateful and comforting," especially underneath the shade of this dear old cedar tree.

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LADY CLARICE : [continuing.] Rupert is so sorry to miss you. He asked me to give you many messages from him.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : The regret is mutual. Last time I was down here, Sir Rupert and I had a tremendous political discussion, and it was still unfinished when I reached the train.

LADY CLARICE : [laughing.] Were you trying to convert him into a Radical ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : No, I think it was rather the other way about. On the whole my Liberalism is much more shaky than his Toryism. I used to be a very ardent Radical once—when I was “a young man in a hurry”—in fact. But now that the “sere and yellow leaf” approaches I am beginning to wish to advance more slowly, nationally—as well as individually.

LADY CLARICE : Ah ! you have given up believing that “the creed of a life-time” can be compressed into the “manifesto of a moment” according to true Radical doctrine ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Well, yes. The Newcastle programme was, I confess, rather too much for me. The Liberal party certainly needs fewer manifestoes and more “still strong men.” But where has Sir Rupert gone ?

LADY CLARICE : He has gone down to Breezeford to see poor Leo. I left him yesterday and return on Tuesday. In the meanwhile his father is keeping him company.

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE: I do not envy you your *séjour* at the sea-side. I was once in a weak moment induced to spend a few days at what is described in guide-books as "a quiet sea-side resort with plentiful attractions." Quiet it certainly was, with the exception of a brass band and a nigger minstrel, though where the "attractions" came in I never could discover.

LADY CLARICE: Sea-side places in England are most extraordinarily unattractive as a rule. However, Breezeford is tolerable in some respects. It has no "parade," and the average inhabitant seems of an unaggressive type. It really suits Leo wonderfully well too, as he can sit about in his bath-chair most of the day under the fir-trees. In fact he is getting quite ambitious now about walking.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: That is capital news; and how about Gerald? Have you heard from him lately?

LADY CLARICE: I heard about a week ago. He seems quite to have settled down to his life out there, and is also very happy over the success of his book, which he says he owes entirely to you.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [hurriedly.] Oh, that's sheer nonsense. No one can really do anything for an intrinsically worthless book. But his happened to be a good one, and so it "caught on." It is not the reviewers or press-people who really decide the fate of a book.

LADY CLARICE: The public represent no doubt the true jury. Yet all the same, the public must be told

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about a book before buying it. And Gerald says he owes that chiefly to you——

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Gerald exaggerates my very commonplace little services on his behalf most absurdly. If I hear any more about his gratitude I shall be covered with confusion. I give you my word that I never do good deeds. But you have done a good deed certainly to-day, in letting me come down to a world of green fields and sunshine. What a lovely evening it is. There is something, too, that is always so restful about this place !

LADY CLARICE: *[laughing.]* That "something" is not connected with Mumps, I fear. She has her eye upon you for various enterprises. If she has her way I am afraid you will hardly find us very "restful."

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: But do please let her have her way, Lady Clarice. Her "ways" are always so delightfully unexpected. The last time I was down here she beguiled me to the top of a hay-rick, and removed the ladder. It was really a thrilling sensation ! I have rarely felt anything to equal it.

LADY CLARICE: You are far too good to our little madcap. I'm afraid she is no respecter of persons.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Ah! there I must differ from you. She told me with obvious sincerity that she didn't think I was "half a bad runner," though of course "after Rex" I seemed rather flabby. I assure you I went back to London feeling quite elated, and disposed to challenge the editor of the *Athenaeum* to a game of leap-frog.

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LADY CLARICE: Here is Mumps approaching, and I warn you that you will have to be very firm if you do not intend to be again beguiled on to the top of some hay-rick and left to your fate.

MUMPS: [with enthusiasm.] Oh, Mr. Buckstone, I am glad to see you. I was quite afraid you had lost your train. You see [sitting down confidentially beside him] if you'd not been able to come to-day—I mean for a Saturday and Sunday—I shouldn't have been so free, and couldn't have given you so much time.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [seriously.] The stars in their courses evidently fought for me.

MUMPS: [suspiciously.] Is that poetry? I hate poetry myself. Grandmamma makes me read Milton in the mornings, and it's—

LADY CLARICE: [interposing.] Mumps, are you not rather unnecessarily garrulous?

MUMPS: But Mr. Buckstone doesn't know grandmamma, Mother; if he did he'd know exactly how I feel about poetry—

LADY CLARICE: Perhaps he can dispense with that knowledge altogether. At any rate if you do intend to give up your "free time" to his entertainment, do not leave him perched upon a hay-stack.

MUMPS: [affably.] It was really most unlucky; I merely meant to take the ladder away for five minutes, but someone came and claimed my attention (I think it was on the subject of the young guinea-pigs) and I forgot all about him.

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Very naturally! Still one learns by bitter experience. Next time, Miss Mumps, I shall be more wary.

MUMPS: [*insinuatingly.*] I suppose you wouldn't like to come and see the kingfisher's nest down by the lake, would you?

[LESLIE BUCKSTONE *glances irresolutely at his hostess.*]

LADY CLARICE: Why should not you and Mumps walk down to the lake? It is a most lovely evening.

MUMPS: Won't you come too, Mother?

LADY CLARICE: My dear child, I am expecting a "Dorcus deputation." I could not possibly invite them to look for king-fishers' nests!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Is it permitted to any "mere man" to inquire of what a "Dorcus deputation" consists?

ENID: It is a collection of all the old tabbies of the village, who periodically arrive here to narrate their grievances to Mother.

LADY CLARICE: I think we must not do them injustice. They are really a very well-meaning body of women, who do a great deal of good amongst the poor; in many cases at considerable self-sacrifice.

ENID: [*rather depreciatingly.*] Oh, of course I know they are very virtuous. Still, they always remind me of the Cranford ladies with their "crimped head-dresses" and "genteel" manners. I'm sure Miss Lavinia Dickery might have stepped straight out from between the pages of Mrs. Gaskell's story.

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LADY CLARICE : Well, dear, if she stepped back, into the pages of book-life, real life, at least village life, would be considerably the loser.

ENID : Not from the æsthetic standpoint.

LADY CLARICE : [gently.] Still, I think one can easily find it in one's heart to forgive her the false auburn front and even the cameo brooch, when one remembers how she nursed that poor consumptive girl last winter and how she deprived herself of all but the barest necessities of life in order to supply her *protégée* with plenty of beef-tea and burgundy.

MUMPS : Yes, Mother, I believe she's quite a good old thing. Although [sadly] she *will* always give me Miss Yonge's works on my birthdays.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [gravely] I trust only a "bowl-derised" edition ? However, as to the Deputation, I begin to feel deeply interested in it, and am sorely disappointed at not being able to attend it. Do you [turning to LADY CLARICE] anticipate a calm sitting, or a "stormy" meeting ?

LADY CLARICE : [smiling.] Well, my mother-in-law and the Dorcas Ladies had a difference of opinion whilst I was away. And we are going now to try and see if we cannot find some way out of the difficulty.

[At this moment a servant appears and announces that MRS. BLOBSON, MISS DICKERY, MISS LAVINIA DICKERY, and MISS STUBBS are in the drawing-room, and LADY CLARICE enters the house.]

MUMPS : [sympathetically.] Poor Mother ! She will

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have a lot of bother with those old Dorcases. You said I think, that you did *not* know grandmamma ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : I have not that honour.

MUMPS : Well, you will see her at dinner, no doubt. And she's sure to disagree with everything you say.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Dear me ! Then I shall studiously avoid all controversial topics.

MUMPS : Oh, that won't do you any good. She'll disagree then with what you *don't* say.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : But surely that's impossible ?

MUMPS : [with conviction.] Not to grandmamma. Have you [meditatively] ever seen the print in the library of Boadicea defying the Roman Legions ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Yes.

MUMPS : Well, that's just what our ancestress looks like when she gets into an argument !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : You terrify me !

MUMPS : I once had an old nurse, who used to say, that certain people were sent to us as " blessings in disguise." Now with grandmamma it is easy enough to see the *disguise*, though I don't know where the blessing comes in, especially on her gouty days !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Your words fill me with apprehension !

MUMPS : Oh, you needn't mind. She won't be likely to take you " in hand."

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : That at least sounds reassuring.

MUMPS : [impressively.] Ah ! you may well say that ! Grandmamma says she has taken me in hand, and it's

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really most unpleasant! But [*with sudden excitement*] do look there! Do you see that swan by the island? From the way it's swimming in and out of the reeds, I'm certain it must have a nest. Oh, what fun, do let's go and see!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: But how? Do you propose swimming across to the island?

MUMPS: Of course not. But there's an old boat moored just on the other side of the weeping willow. We can get across in two minutes; I'll steer and you can row.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*good-humouredly.*] Well, I'm at your service. Command and I obey. [*They proceed to disentangle the boat from its reedy moorings, and reach the banks of the island.*]

MUMPS: [*diving about with her boathook.*] This is splendid! Look at that mass of reeds at the edge of the water. I'm sure it's part of a nest. Yes [*joyously waving her boathook.*] It is—look, there are six or seven young ones. [*They examine the nest with great interest, then proceed further to reconnoitre the island.*] MUMPS [*enthusiastically*] Isn't it jolly over here? The boys and I have got a cave on the other side. It's rather full of frogs at times, still, there's a lovely place where you can crawl in and out, and almost feel as if it was your house. I should like to live there always. It would make one feel like Robinson Crusoe. Don't you think so?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*meekly.*] I anticipate that in such case it would doubtless be my humble lot to be

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the "good man Friday," and to fetch and carry for you?

MUMPS : Oh, we'd go shares in everything quite fairly. And if there were any biscuits or such like over, we'd toss up. However, you haven't half seen the island yet. [After some further time devoted to exploration they re-embark for the "mainland" as MUMPS terms it. Towards midstream where the water is about ten feet deep and the current strongest.]

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : suddenly remarks.] Do you know the boat is leaking? Lift up your feet, or you will get drenched. The water is pouring in through that crevice in the stern.

MUMPS : [with sudden remorse.] Oh, I quite forgot that the boat leaked! Rex plugged up the hole with a cork last time we went out. But it has floated away. And dear me! we were forbidden to use it till it had been properly mended! However, [producing a battered tin mug from the recesses of the boat] I'll bale out the water as fast as I can. [She proceeds to bale with much vigour and they reach the bank without being swamped, but drenched to the knees.]

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [philosophically.] Well, next time we dramatise Robinson Crusoe, let us endeavour to procure a seaworthy vessel. However, "all's well that ends well."

MUMPS : [gloomily.] Do you think it ends well? I don't.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [glancing at her attire.] You certainly look rather "draggled" about the skirts! How-

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ever, probably no one will see you come in. And [good-naturedly] I promise to tell no tales.

MUMPS: [*drawing herself up with as much dignity as her bedraggled condition will permit of.*] You are perfectly at liberty to discuss the matter. Naturally I shall explain it at once to my Mother.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: You are quite right. I apologise.

MUMPS: [*relaxing immediately.*] Oh, don't bother about that, the thing now is to get home as fast as possible. Do you think you would mind the short cut?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*warily.*] What is it like ?

MUMPS: Oh, it's quite easy I assure you. You only have to climb the hawthorn fences down in the lower plantation, then hop over the moss-bog tufts; jump the watercress stream, and vault the iron railings into the paddock—and there you are.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*laughing.*] There I am ! Well, "in for a penny in for a pound." Lead on most valiant pioneer, and I will follow—to the death ! [*They eventually reach the Court by an excessively arduous cross-country route.*]

SCENE V.

SCENE. [*A little later. Dinner is just over. LADY CLARICE and LADY ST. OLAVE are in the front drawing-room. ENID in the further drawing-room is dreamily playing Beethoven's "Lieder ohne Wörte." LESLIE BUCKSTONE is smoking a cigar on the terrace.*]

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*very resolutely snapping off the threads*

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of her work.] I saw that foolish Dorcas committee leaving the house just as I was coming home this evening. I do trust they have come to some sensible conclusion with regard to the distribution of those orphans' shifts?

LADY CLARICE: Yes. I think they have arranged the matter quite satisfactorily.

LADY ST. OLAVE: I'm glad to hear it. Indeed, Clarice, I never met such a body of ninnies before in all my days—really I as good as told them so! In fact [*sighing*] the amount I've had to put up with, both in the house and out of it, since you've been away, is quite incredible.

LADY CLARICE: I am so sorry you have found things difficult.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Difficult is no word for it. I'm sure nothing but my affection for you and Rupert and my regard for the welfare of your children, would ever have induced me to volunteer to come here and see after things in your absence. And really Rupert has given me no help.

LADY CLARICE: In what way?

LADY ST. OLAVE: Well, there were so many things I desired to see altered. For instance, I wished him to speak to the Dorcas committee about the absurd way in which they mismanaged parish matters; as Lord of the Manor a word from him would certainly have carried weight. But he would do nothing, he said it would seem so like interference. Then too, about

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Muriel, I'm sure *I've* done my best for that child. But it is quite hopeless whilst she is encouraged in her hoydenish ways by her father.

LADY CLARICE: Rupert likes to have her about with him. She is quite as much interested in farm matters as he is himself. Certainly tumbling about a farmyard is rather detrimental to her wardrobe, but otherwise it really seems to me fairly harmless.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Humph! I consider it most unsuitable. Some nice French convent—for I don't care for the tone of English schools—would, I think, be the best place for Muriel. As you know, Clarice, *I* was brought up in France, and I have the greatest confidence in the French system. A child like Muriel would be an impossibility in France.

LADY CLARICE: [gently.] I'm sorry you think Mumps has been badly brought up; I'm afraid the blame must rest chiefly with me.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Oh, I don't blame you, my dear. Englishwomen are always so unsuspicious; I suppose it is in their temperament, but it is a great drawback from the educational standpoint. Constant *surveillance* is what all young people need. Of course Muriel need not be made into a Catholic; still she would live under Catholic discipline, which is the most thorough in the world.

LADY CLARICE: You speak, no doubt, from a fortunate personal experience. Still, very often girls' schools, however well organised, become the very

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centre of sickly sentimentality and unhealthy emotionalism. . . . [pauses a moment and then continues.] However vigilant the nuns may be they can scarcely know everything about their *pensionnaires*, and evil communications very speedily "corrupt good manners." And, moreover, I should be sorry to think that Mumps, who—whatever her faults—is frankness personified, should be placed under a regime of espionage and of suspicion. You will, I hope, forgive my speaking with so much finality?

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*testily.*] You are evidently resolved not to see the matter from my point of view. Although if you knew Muriel as well as I do—

LADY CLARICE: [*parenthetically.*] I think I do know her pretty well!

LADY ST. OLAVE: Ah! but to you she always shows herself at her best—to me, at her worst. It is a very singular thing. Now last Tuesday, for instance, are you aware how she behaved?

LADY CLARICE: Mumps' narrative was certainly somewhat incoherent. But I gathered that she went out otter-hunting without leave.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*wrathfully.*] I was expecting her to read Milton, and when half an hour after her usual time had passed, I sent upstairs to the schoolroom. Fraülein, however, was astounded to hear that she was not with me. Several hours passed, and I began to be afraid that she had fallen into the lake and drowned herself or something of that sort, when suddenly, after

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the whole place had been scoured in search of her, she marched coolly into the house and remarked that she had been out with the otter-hounds ! Naturally I was exceedingly angry, and considered that she should be punished, so I ordered her off to her room, and bolted the door—that I thought would at least keep her out of mischief. To my dismay, however, some minutes later, I perceived her quietly climbing about the roof ! I called out to her to come down immediately, being in an agony of terror lest she should slip over the parapet ! But if you will believe it, the little wretch refused point blank to return until the door had been unbolted ! Of course, it was *quite* against my principles to give in to her. However, there seemed to be no alternative ! What would you have done ?

LADY CLARICE : [reflectively.] Well, I suppose it would have been necessary to punish her. But I think perhaps I should have left that door unbolted. However, I have spoken very seriously to Mumps about her escapade, and told her that she must apologise to you.

LADY ST. OLAVE : I'm convinced she will do nothing of the sort !

LADY CLARICE : Well, we shall see.

LADY ST. OLAVE : What between her and Enid, I have hardly had a moment's peace.

LADY CLARICE : But surely Enid has not been “perambulating” about the roof ?

LADY ST. OLAVE : No. But her pig-headedness on the subject of Lord Kingsclere is outrageous. She

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discourages all his attentions, and pointedly avoids him. I spoke to Rupert several times about it, but he would only say that he saw no reason why Enid should be coerced into any marriage, and when I told him how utterly unreasonable her conduct was, he merely said that Enid was "kittle cattle" to interfere with, referred me to you, and hurried from the room. And this reminds me [*dropping her voice*] that I met Ronald Kingsclere this afternoon riding through the village, and he pulled up and asked me whether you were all going to the Horse-show on Monday. Is Enid going?

LADY CLARICE: Yes; at least I have advised her to go.

LADY ST. OLAVE: That is very right. I should think [*meditatively*] that he might very possibly come to the point on Monday.

LADY CLARICE: What point? He has already asked Enid to marry him.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Already! But [*incredulously*] you don't mean to tell me that she has been so—so insane as to *refuse* him?

LADY CLARICE: [*tranquilly continuing her tapestry work.*] She does not care for him.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*indignantly.*] Enid never told me a word about it! She is so unnaturally secretive. I'm sure I cannot tell what to make of her. It may, of course, be that I'm old-fashioned, still I do like to see young people, *young*. The new-fashioned "theorising" girl seems to me very closely akin to the old-fashioned prig!

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LADY CLARICE: Except that even when misguided, she is usually in earnest. Now Enid is desperately in earnest over everything. She always has been. I remember when she was about fourteen she showed me a journal which she had been keeping for some time. She had drawn a copy of Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" as a frontispiece. The book contained a summary of all her own impressions of life, and crude and vague as were its theories, yet it really showed a pathetic amount of "twilight groping."

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*impatiently.*] I trust you ordered her to tear it up immediately?

LADY CLARICE: No. But I advised her to play rounders more regularly.

LADY ST. OLAVE: "Girls' feelings" are, it appears to me, far too much studied now-a-days. Enid was always an "uncomfortable" sort of girl, even in the school-room.

LADY CLARICE: [*after a pause.*] What do you wish me to say to Enid?

LADY ST. OLAVE: She must be brought to her senses. For instance, if she could be made to see that she could quite well be—spared—at home—that might work wonders.

LADY CLARICE: [*quietly.*] Made to feel *de trop* in her own home?

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*uncomfortably.*] Oh, well! of course I did not mean to advocate any—er—extreme measures. Still, I cannot help thinking that a little

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judicious family pressure might be brought to bear on Enid. Why half the unmarried women in London have *voluntarily* thrown themselves at Lord Kingsclere's head. And really, if you come to think of it, it is absurd that Enid should be so hypercritical. Of course, it sounds very *bourgeois* to talk about a good marriage. But in point of fact, it's what all mothers and daughters desire. And as to Ronald Kingsclere, he seems very easy-going—and no doubt in a little time would make an excellent husband.

LADY CLARICE: [gravely.] But even you, who are his most ardent champion, make that one reservation—in time!

LADY ST. OLAVE: Well! of course he has been used to sowing his wild oats. Men of his type have so very much temptation, and Rome wasn't built in a day. Still, in time, I see no sort of reason why he should not settle down and become quite *rangé*. He will probably forget all about his "Gaiety" ladies. And even if he doesn't, Enid can easily ignore them.

LADY CLARICE: But even if a man become *rangé* at forty—which is not always certain—it does not necessarily imply that his past is physically, as well as morally, blotted out.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [rather vaguely.] Oh but, you see, men are so susceptible to good influences. And after all, if a London man has—has amused himself, that is what one expects. And he is obviously very deeply attached to Enid, for although she has refused

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him, like the little goose that she is, he has evidently not given up the hope of persuading her to marry him.

LADY CLARICE : As he would understand the term, no doubt Ronald Kingsclere is sincerely in love with Enid. He likes her pretty fair head, and probably troubles himself very little as to what it may contain, and doubtless finds her quite a different type from either Lady Snowdon or Dotty Dare, the dancer, who are supposed equally to share his admiration. But for how long would Enid's influence be likely to remain paramount ? Physical passion usually dies out with possession. And if in temper, taste and temperament two people are wholly unsuited to one another—what remains ?

LADY ST. OLAVE : [with conviction.] In Enid's case a great deal would "remain." As a married woman she would, or at least could, have innumerable interests. As mistress of a large house she could exercise an almost unlimited influence in any way she chose. She would never, *never* be harassed over money matters, as you and I, have so frequently been. She could "amuse" herself if she chose, and have adorers by the score ; or, since she is such a blue-stocking, she might start a Recamier salon and get all the clever literary and political people about her—her career would then be an accomplished fact. I believe plenty of *mariages de convenances* turn out admirably. Look at France—every French girl has her husband chosen for her by her parents. In the Faubourg they arrange these sort of things far more sensibly than we do over here !

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LADY CLARICE: Except when—as in so many cases that we know of—the *mariage de convenance* finds its sequel in the *ménage à trois*. For instance you remember—

LADY ST. OLAVE: [hastily.] Well, to return to Enid—if she refuse this marriage, what has she to look forward to? She is beautiful—that I will admit—in a pale, fragile, Burne-Jones sort of fashion, but many men would find her *fâde* and insipid. Men are so “difficult” in these days. All the married women turn their heads by running after them, and girls like Enid, with no audacity, no “go,” and no money, have scarcely a chance. There are such numberless *demoiselles à marier*—and so few marrying men! Living down here in the country, Enid is quite extraordinarily fortunate to have such an opportunity. To throw it on one side would—[piously]—be flying in the very face of Providence, let alone the horrible selfishness involved in staying on here at home when things are so bad financially.

LADY CLARICE: Still, Enid is not responsible for our poverty.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Oh! of course she cannot help land having gone down; Gerald, on whom we all built so much, having turned out so wretchedly; and poor Lionel being unable to do anything to retrieve the family fortunes. But what she *can* help, and *should* help, is staying on here as a burden, when she might accept a suitable home of her own. That indeed, is sheer, downright wickedness. Most unprincipled, I call it, and—well, irreligious.

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LADY CLARICE : [smiling slightly.] Irreligious not to marry Ronald Kingsclere ? That is a point of view which certainly had not before occurred to me, nor, I imagine, to Enid.

LADY ST. OLAVE : [despairingly.] I really don't know what the world is coming to ! Girls now-a-days seem to sift and pry into the past lives of their future husbands in a way which I am bound to say I consider most *indecent*.

LADY CLARICE : Morbid curiosity is always objectionable ; still, on the question of matrimony, it seems to me that girls have a right to possess full knowledge. They are signing a life-contract. It is surely only fair that they should understand all that contract may involve ?

LADY ST. OLAVE : I think it's against Nature.

LADY CLARICE : [quietly.] I cannot help thinking that it is far more "against Nature" for a pure girl to be compelled to pass her life with a man whose vices have been engrained into his nature through long years of unrestrained license.

LADY ST. OLAVE : [loftily.] I think of the child's happiness.

LADY CLARICE : And I of her health. Are not the two things inseparable ?

LADY ST. OLAVE : Her health ! Oh, you mean . . . But surely Lord Kingsclere—[hesitates].

LADY CLARICE : Belongs to a marked type ? Yes. That is very obvious, I should think . . .

LADY ST. OLAVE : You mean ?

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LADY CLARICE: [*quietly.*] You will forgive me, I hope, but I should prefer not to go into details. . . . Besides, here comes Enid.

[ENID *approaches rather languidly.*]

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*glancing at her with strong disapproval.*] Why do I never see you with any needlework in your hands? In my day girls didn't loiter about in that listless sort of way all the evening.

ENID: [*apologetically.*] I have been painting all day, grandmamma, and feeling rather tired, I did not begin any work.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*sarcastically.*] I have several skeins of floss silk to be unravelled, but I suppose the exertion would be too much for you?

ENID: [*courteously.*] I shall be very glad if I can help you.

[ENID *takes the skein and proceeds slowly to disentangle it.* A few moments later LESLIE BUCKSTONE enters the rooms through the verandah.]

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*pausing a moment by the French window.*] Is not the moonlight glorious? It is bright enough to decipher a Bradshaw by, or to send a minor poet off into hexameters.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Or possibly off his head!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Poets are proverbially mad. But some people say we are *all* a little mad. I sometimes think that may be true.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*with some asperity.*] Please speak for yourself. I never feel deranged.

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Oh, ah! of course. I was merely putting forward an abstract theory.

LADY CLARICE: I think on the whole it is rather a charitable one. It would explain so much of the inconsistency of human nature.

LADY ST. OLAVE: In these days it seems to me that everybody is always trying to explain everything according to some elaborate "theories." And after all [*impressively*] what better guides can we have than right and wrong?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*rather ironically.*] Ah! yes. And those people who always see right and wrong as an ethical, and not as a geographical fact, are so very fortunate.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*loftily.*] I fail to follow your meaning.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Really I doubt if it be worth following. [Turning to LADY CLARICE.] Lady St. Olave and your daughter, like the Fates of old, seem busy unravelling the tangled skein of life. But you, Lady Clarice—could you be prevailed on to come for a moonlight stroll along the rose-terrace?

LADY CLARICE: [*rising and joining him by the window.*] Yes, I will come.

LADY CLARICE and LESLIE BUCKSTONE *depart together.*] LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*as they pace slowly down the rose-terrace.*] You see I did not mislead you. On a night like this it is little short of a crime to remain within four walls. Look at those colour-dashes on the lake over

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there. Would they not send an "impressionist" into a state of fine frenzy? Perhaps it is well, however, that we have no "brethren of the brush" here to take "snap-shots" at Nature.

LADY CLARICE: I can never be sure whether you sympathise with artists, or really despise them?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [drily.] I am not especially enamoured of the artistic temperament, if that is what you allude to. We journalists who write about art, and know artists intimately, see through a good deal of the footlight glamour with which the world chooses to surround its artist-idols.

LADY CLARICE: [laughing.] It is said: "*Rien n'est sacrée pour un sapeur.*" Perhaps the proverb is wrong; and one should read journalist for *sapeur*?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: I think I would undertake to back a journalist against most professionals (doctors perhaps excepted), for acquiring an all-round knowledge of human nature. That sort of knowledge leaves one but few illusions.

LADY CLARICE: The pen is the modern sword.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [meditatively.] Yes, in England, on the whole, it may be likened to a sword. In other lands it is sometimes merely a stiletto.

LADY CLARICE: You mean its power over here is usually used with dignity and with discretion?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Of course it would be idle to deny, though perhaps libellous to affirm, that certain journals whose directors should know better, lend them-

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selves to financial and individual "log-rolling." Still, taken as a whole, the English press is not, I think, that hot-bed of blackguardism which a certain novelist has recently affirmed. All these sort of questions are bound to be relative. We can only judge of our own press-standards by comparing them with those of other nations. And certainly the blackmailing "revelations" of some of our neighbours would not be likely to take place over here.

LADY CLARICE : That speaks very well for our best press men and women.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Yes, I think that this is the age of journalism, rather than of literature. Our journalistic standards seem to be improving, our literary standards to be degenerating.

LADY CLARICE : So many people write now-a-days.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Pardon me, my dear lady, but so few people *write*, although of the making of books "there is verily no end." In fact, inkomania is like dram-drinking, only its evil effects are far less localised !

LADY CLARICE : Ah ! the hapless modern novelist. I am sure that, metaphorically speaking, you usually leave him black and blue !

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Yes, I am his truest friend. If he would but heed my counsels he might often adopt some quite useful calling. I will not individualise, but I will frankly admit that I consider most modern fiction to be unreadable. That [*laughing*] is perhaps why I read so little—and review so much ! Seriously speak-

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ing, however, the fiction of to-day seems to stand at a very low ebb. Its lack of imagination so frequently degenerates into mere squalor. Its so-called "naturalism" into mere nastiness. The simplest life can be made artistically beautiful. The little fruit-sellers and egg-vendors of George Sand's, or of Ouida's peasant idylls (for where is there a more pathetic prose poem than in *Two little Wooden Shoes?*) are exquisitely picturesque as they saunter laughing through the sunny vineyards of their *côte d'azur*, or chant their angelus amidst the tranquil shadows of some "odorous eve of silence and of silver." But the fruit-sellers and egg-vendors of modern fiction! Faugh! is not the reek of the rotten eggs for ever in our nostrils? Are we not eternally haunted with the foulness of the garlick? Still, an age which has produced a Ruskin, a Pater, a Symmonds and a Meredith, need not despair. Some of the foregoing—and notably Ruskin and Pater—have, it is true, been accused of over-elaboration of phrase and of form. But how easy it is to condone a crime so rare amidst a race of slovens. Their would-be detractors always remind me of a story of the great Napoleon, who, when a jealous courtier assured him of the "madness" of one of his ablest Generals, merely remarked, "Mad, is he? *Ma foi*, then I wish he would bite the whole staff!" With regard to Pater's work, is it possible to read a page of it without being altogether entranced by the metrical, musical sweep of those long-cadenced lines, which stir our senses like

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the throb of sweetest music, and seem to steep our souls in the sadness of worlds deathless—although long dead! And in his choice of themes Greek, Pater was very wise. More than any other people, did the Dorian race realise the inter-dependence of all the arts. To them all the muses were sisters—eternal allegory of the truest conception of creative genius—whether it find utterance through colour, chisel, melody, or metre. Perfect prose must ever be as musical as a melody of Chopin; as exquisitely tinted as a Rembrandt canvas; as symmetrically chiselled as a Phydian statue.

LADY CLARICE: Your standard is severe. But it seems to me a very just one.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Yes, but I rarely find expression for my classical ideals. As a rule I am too much swamped by the eternal trivial. And that is the worst of a journalist's life. He must always be "in harness;" and is obliged to keep, not merely in touch with his age, but even a little in front of it—to know not only what is popular to-day—but also what will be popular to-morrow.

LADY CLARICE: It must be a very hard life?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Hard and hardening some people say. You see we writers are always on the look-out for "copy," and we are apt to treat our fellow creatures from a scientific rather than from a sympathetic point of view.

LADY CLARICE: I wonder if I may be allowed to hazard a very daring statement?

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE: By all means.

LADY CLARICE: Well, then, I should like to see you married to some nice woman.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: But I lack the domestic qualities. I am what Rudyard Kipling calls his elephant, "a bachelor by instinct."

LADY CLARICE: Which being "done into English" means, I think, that you are either too *difficile*, or else not *difficile* enough?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: It means both. The type of woman I could respect would not fit into my somewhat nomadic existence ; as to the other types, those *qui filent*, *qui filent, et qui disparaissent*, I never regard them seriously.

LADY CLARICE: [musingly.] Do you know I always feel so intensely sorry for the women *qui filent*, *qui filent, et qui disparaissent*.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [with some surprise.] Sorry—you! But why? The type of woman I allude to no more resembles you or the women whom you know than a tiger resembles a civilised Englishman.

LADY CLARICE: Still, they are women just as much as we are women ; they must know women's sorrows, and why not also women's affections ? I think our point of view—I mean the point of view of the majority of educated women—is distinctly illogical. If we *must* arrogate to ourselves the position of judges (an ethical attitude which I am far from sure that we are justified in assuming) we should at least endeavour to avoid ministering injustice.

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LESLIE BUCKSTONE : You mean——?

LADY CLARICE : I mean that our position is wholly untenable when we, with a great assumption of moral punctiliousness, freely tolerate and invariably pardon the male sinner whilst we condemn the woman—sometimes his victim—at any rate always his partner, without mercy. This would not be the case with any other sort of crime. Supposing that a man and woman were equally guilty of theft, and that when brought to judgment the judge should pardon the male offender on the plea that he was a man, and severely sentence the female offender because she was a woman—how would such an irregular form of justice be regarded by the public at large ?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : There would, of course, in such case be one cry of indignation from the whole country, from Land's End to John o' Groats. But you must admit that the faults we are now discussing come under a somewhat different heading. Even acknowledging, which I am frankly prepared to do, present methods to be illogical and fraught with injustice, I see no use in displacing them until they can be replaced by a more perfect system. Nor do I see that there would be any gain in the fact that women of your type should overlook moral faults in women as well as in men. Surely that would only tend to lower even the existing standards ?

LADY CLARICE : I did not mean that we should *condone* moral faults in our own sex. I merely said that

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we need not, all things considered, condemn other women quite so drastically.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Women with high moral standards are perhaps bound to seem merciless. But surely they represent some of the great moral safeguards of the race?

LADY CLARICE: [*musingly.*] I quite see that they represent certain definite *social* safeguards. No one can have lived in London for any length of time without becoming aware of that fact. But between *social* safeguards and moral standards there appears to me to be a great gulf fixed. Possibly I have my own ideas of morality, which are unshared by many women. But I admit that it seems to me, that according to the present system we start from a wrong standpoint, and arrive—as is inevitable, at exceedingly unsatisfactory results.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Of course, logically speaking, an unequal moral standard for the sexes is indefensible. Still there are many other points to be considered. Good women, we know, are born angels; whilst men, even the best of them, are mere descendants of the old Adam.

LADY CLARICE: The “old Adam” is open to improvement certainly; but I do not see that he is likely to be bettered by women shutting their eyes to all his moral delinquencies, and creating a tribe of feminine pariahs to bear the entire burden of mutual sin.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Of course there is a great deal

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of injustice done to women by women as well as by men. Still, it seems inevitable unless indeed you, and women like you, would be prepared to defend the tenets of, let us say, the *Woman who Did*. Now I put it frankly to you, Lady Clarice—would you be prepared to receive such a woman as Grant Allen's heroine at your house?

LADY CLARICE: [after a moment's pause.] It would depend entirely on circumstances. If I thought I could succeed in showing her how much "out of perspective" were her views of life, I certainly should not shun her. On the other hand, if I were sure that she were fully persuaded of what seems to me the most pernicious doctrine, namely, that the world may be regenerated by women's "levelling down" instead of men's "levelling up," then I should not wish, for the sake of the weaker brethren, to aid her to spread her doctrines. That type of teaching seems to me to be likely to throw humanity back into all the animalism from which it has so slowly evolved through all these centuries of Christianity and of civilisation.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Women, certainly, aided by nature or the angels, as the scientists or the poets would affirm, have evolved, on the whole, upon a high plane of physical morality. But, as I have said before, the "old Adam" unhappily remains.

LADY CLARICE: Then it must be the special mission of the "new Eve" to aid him in his ethical development.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: And how?

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LADY CLARICE : Well, I think she may very possibly do more by keeping her own door-step clean than by making herself so exceedingly *affairée* over the "moral doorsteps" of her sisters.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : What is your opinion of the ethics of the "shrieking sisterhood" ?

LADY CLARICE : I have never come across any of them ; I scarcely know what their ethics are.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Of course you have read *The Heavenly Twins* ?

LADY CLARICE : Yes. But though I cannot quite agree with all its conclusions, I admire the obvious sincerity of purpose with which it was written. It seems to be a crusading book of great power.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [laughing.] Lady Clarice, you amaze me ! I shall next expect to hear of you speaking on the platform of the Pioneer Club, surrounded by a picked Amazonian body-guard.

LADY CLARICE : No, that is quite out of my line. However I am sincerely in favour of women, whether "new" or "old," endeavouring to take themselves seriously. It seems to me a step in the right direction.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : The average new woman does "take herself" with alarming seriousness. Unhappily, however, other people usually decline to do so !

LADY CLARICE : The new woman, if she is to be prevented from developing into a terrible prig, or a dreadful bore, requires to be laughed at. It is, I should

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think, extremely good for her to find herself mirrored in *Punch* and so forth. Still, on the other hand, when she is in earnest, she surely merits only, as George Eliot has said "the smiles which beget no cruelty."

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [with conviction.] I decline altogether to regard you as an "advanced" woman. It would shatter all my illusions !

LADY CLARICE: Then dare I confess that I am a member of the Board of Guardians, and also the School Board.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Ah ! but that is to your credit.

LADY CLARICE: A century ago, I suppose, it would have been impossible. And people would have thought such a suggestion outrageous. Now, there are many women whose public work appears to give general satisfaction.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [meditatively.] Of course where things have to be settled about children and so on, it does seem absurd not to consult women.

LADY CLARICE: Obviously absurd. How can the male guardians go into all the minor details of children's health, clothing, etc., and yet these points are quite as essential to pauper children as to well-to-do ones.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [obstinately.] Still you have not, and you *will* not, convince me that you are, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, an "advanced" woman. You do not, I conclude, spend sleepless nights over the question of the suffrage ?

LADY CLARICE: No, I cannot say that that question

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has as yet broken my rest ! Still on the whole I am in favour of granting the suffrage to women ratepayers. Besides, is it not bound to come ? I cannot seriously think that an educated woman ratepayer is less capable of forming a clear judgment on Imperial matters than the oft-cited village ploughman.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : But it is chiefly a question of unsexing women .

LADY CLARICE : And do you seriously think that the passing of any laws will ever really unsex women ? I very much doubt it. A woman, who has any real womanhood in her, will remain a woman to the end of the chapter. You may give her all the political and civil privileges you choose, but she will still cleave to her babies .

LESLIE BUCKSTONE . Then why grant her privileges when she has—babies ?

LADY CLARICE : Some women have no babies. Moreover, I am not sure that in any case a woman shows much wisdom in merging her whole individuality in her motherhood, at least in her physical motherhood.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Such words coming from your lips astound me, Lady Clarice. You are so much to your children, that I should have thought you would have regarded motherhood as being the very apotheosis of womanhood. You will I hope pardon me for being so personal ?

LADY CLARICE : Of course. And since you have chosen me as a type, it will not perhaps seem egoistical

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if I explain to you my point of view. I understand "motherhood" as belonging to a far wider and higher plane than the one which is dominated by the mere flesh-and-blood instinct. *L'amour de bête fauve*, the tiger-instinct which would tear and rend all living creatures for the sake of its own young, seems to be but a poor sentiment. The true mother is assuredly the woman who can recognise that all things weak or even weary have a claim upon her, be they, or be they not, of her own kin? Moreover, a man whose wife's whole interests centre in her nursery would not find as complete a companion as would be the case, were her sympathies broader. I was reading a French book the other day, in which the writer (though not particularly well disposed towards *perfide Albion* as a whole) remarked that of all European nations Englishwomen were the most "companionable" to their husbands because they did not adopt an attitude of *paresse d'esprit* with regard to all questions outside their own personal and social sphere, but took a practical interest in most broad national questions. Surely this is a wholesome sign?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Well, there always is something to be said on both sides of every question.

LADY CLARICE: [laughing.] There is so much to be said on this particular question, that I fear unless we turn our thoughts homewards our "parliament of two" will resolve itself into an "all night sitting"!

[*They return to the Court. LESLIE BUCKSTONE, who has some important letters to write, repairs to the smoking room.*

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LADY CLARICE *finding the drawing-room empty goes upstairs. As she is passing ENID's doorway the latter, looking pale and distraught, appears on the threshold.*]

ENID: Mother, you must come in and talk to me. You are the only one who can imagine or understand the least what I suffer! . . .

LADY CLARICE: *[pausing and regarding her rather gravely.]* Are you becoming hysterical, Enid? I hope not. I should have thought you would have left that kind of thing to the maidservants.

ENID: *[earnestly.]* No, Mother. Indeed I am not hysterical. *[Bursts into tears.]* I am only very, very unhappy. Do come and help me.

LADY CLARICE: *[entering.]* Of course I will help you if I can. But, my dearest child, I must insist upon your putting on some sensible wrap. You will have bronchitis next, rushing to and fro half-undressed!

ENID: *[carelessly throwing on a cloak and continuing to pace restlessly to and fro.]* Mother, I have made up my mind no longer to be a burden to my family.

LADY CLARICE: My dear Enid, you speak rather like a heroine from the Adelphi. Could you not be a little less declamatory—a little more explicit?

ENID: *[throwing herself into a chair and burying her head in her hands.]* If you wish for an explanation, here it is. I have resolved to marry Lord Kingsclere.

LADY CLARICE: Then I conclude your opinion of him has altered?

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ENID : [vehemently.] Not in the least. I loathe and abhor him, but I mean to marry him all the same.

LADY CLARICE : And what are your reasons for so doing ?

ENID : [proudly.] I intend no longer to be a burden to my family. Mother, I always knew that we were not well off ; still, I never *realised* what paupers we were until grandmamma told me to-night.

LADY CLARICE : What did she tell you ?

ENID : She told me that father's income being nearly all in land, things these last few years had been getting worse and worse. And that with Jerry quite cut off from the family, poor Leo bringing in nothing, and Mumps to be educated, she really didn't see how we were to go on. And she said—said such a lot of times, mother, that it was horribly, *wickedly* selfish of me to remain unmarried and a burden to the family, and that the result of everything would be that the Court, the dear old Court, would have to be sold !

LADY CLARICE : And you imagined that your father and I would rather sell you than sell the Court ?

ENID : I thought perhaps I *had* been selfish. And I knew it would make you both very unhappy to leave the Court. And so I . . .

[ENID pauses suddenly, LADY CLARICE glances swiftly at her, then rings the bell, and directs the servant who answers the summons to go and ask MRS. WESTLAKE for some brandy. A few moments later MRS. WESTLAKE, ex-nurse and present housekeeper, appears in person. She is greatly dismayed on

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perceiving the condition of her former nursing, and promptly proceeds to aid LADY CLARICE to administer various restoratives.]

MRS. WESTLAKE: [sympathetically.] Dear heart! my lady, to think the poor lamb should have gone off in this manner! But it's my belief she's not been herself this week past.

LADY CLARICE: A little more eau-de-cologne on her temples. Yes, that's right. And now will you pass me the salts?

[MRS. WESTLAKE complies, then continues in an impressive monologue.]

MRS. WESTLAKE: All this week past, my lady, she has looked that white and wan it might have melted a stone, let alone a Christian. Why, only two days back I was airin' some linen upstairs in the old nursery when she came by lookin' as white as a sheet, and all of a tremble. "I don't half like your looks, Miss Enid," says I, "come in here do, and sit down by the fire, for 'tis a nasty, raw evening, and the fire will do you good, and old nursie will go and get you somethin' warm and comfortin'." I says this very coaxin'-like. But she wouldna' stay, and walked away lookin' terrible low in her spirits.

LADY CLARICE: Miss Enid is, I fear, hardly as strong as you or I could wish, Mrs. Westlake. But Dr. Grahame hopes that she may soon outgrow her delicacy.

MRS. WESTLAKE: [in an undertone, and with the settled

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gloom of her class.] Ah! my lady, there's some of us will never make old bones, do what we will!

[*At this moment LADY ST. OLAVE, disturbed by the sound of footsteps in the corridor, hurries into the room.*]

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*glancing at ENID.*] Hoity, toity! What's all this?

LADY CLARICE: Hush! please. [*To ENID, who has just opened her eyes.*] That's right, darling, try and rouse yourself. You are better now?

ENID: [*gazing about her with blue startled eyes.*] I—I thought I was talking to you, Mother; but why are all these others here? What has happened?

LADY CLARICE: [*soothingly.*] Nothing has happened, dear. Old nursie only came to bring you a little brandy. But you are quite well now, and I think we need not keep her up any longer. Many thanks, Mrs. Westlake, and good-night.

[*MRS. WESTLAKE departs, (darting a Parthian glance at LADY ST. OLAVE, with whom she wages a deathless feud,) and returns to her own realms, where she finds old MACDOUGALL, the gardener, awaiting her.*]

MACDOUGALL: It's late for me to be coming in, Mrs. Westlake, mam. But I wanted to tell ye about the plums. I doubt me if they'll be ready for to-morrow's preservin'.

[*They discuss the plums for some moments till presently MRS. WESTLAKE, lowering her voice says:*]

MRS. WESTLAKE: I'm afraid, Mr. MacDougall, I kept you waitin' a long while this evening. But the fact is,

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I was upstairs with Miss Enid, who is poorly to-night.

MACDOUGALL: That's bad hearin', Mrs. Westlake. What may be the manner o' her complaint?

MRS. WESTLAKE: She went off in a dead faint. And 'twas a long time before her ladyship nor me could bring her round.

MACDOUGALL: [shaking his head.] Queer that!

MRS. WESTLAKE: Ah! Mr. Macdougall, it's my belief Miss Enid's been frettin' herself this week past.

MACDOUGALL: [reflectively.] Well! Well! I wouldna' be surprised. It may be a fine thing to have the heir o' Glastonbury comin' courting. But mayhap if Miss Enid do take him, she'll na' find life over yonder a garden o' roses. A week past come Saturday, I was over at Glastonbury flower-show, and I come upon his Grace's head-gardener. Well, Mr. Phillips, says I, I hear as how we're to be related? Yes, says he, and I deeply diprivate—he's a fine scholar is Mr. Phillips—and I deeply diprivate the connection. Come, says I, that scarce sounds neighbourly, and I dinna' see ye've any call to be so stand-offish. For all his Grace has twice the rent-roll, yet Sir Rupert's family is aulder nor his ain. And as to her ladyship, ye'll na be telling me that Staghomes canna hold their ain wi' the best? Ye mistake me, Mr. MacDougall, says he, I wouldna' say a word against any o' yourn, contrairy-wise. 'Twas our young lord as I was thinkin' of. His Grace is a good master, and I ha' not a word against *him*.

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But the young markis he's an out and out bad lot. Well, says I, now you put it so plain, Mr. Phillips, I will say as how I never heard no special good o' him. Na, says he, ye might take a day's journey fra' all the country-side, an' ye'd never hear naught but ill o' him. Lord Cosmo now, I'll not deny as he has his faults, being mayhap overfond o' cards and horses. But he's an angel o' light when likened to his brother. Do ye mind Giles Gelart's bonnie daughter down at the Wind-mill, what went off to London so sudden last year? Yes, says I, I recollect sommat o' the matter, though I heard very little. Ah! says he, the story wur hushed up for the sake of the family. But 'twas Lord Kingsclere as got the lass into trouble. There wur no harm in the maid, and she'd been brought up seemly, her parents bein' decent folk. But the young lord come over her wi' tales o' how some day he'd make a lady o' her. And she hearkened to him and followed him to town and bided there a wee. But after a bit he got sick o' her. She wur in the family way, and fretted for her ain folk. When she come home she brought her baby with her, and 'twas a cruel sight. Them as brings puir sickly bairns of *that* kind into the world to be a burden to themselves and others, is to my thinking little better nor murderers! so says he. And there I'm with him.

MRS. WESTLAKE: [nodding gravely.] Ah! yes, "the sins o' the fathers shall be visited on the children," and a terrible thought it is that folk like that should wish to marry young ladies like Miss Enid. But it's my

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belief that the old Dowager's at the bottom of that young lord's notion o' marrying Miss Enid. For I don't believe, and I *won't* believe, as Sir Rupert, much less her ladyship, would hold with Miss Enid bein' put upon.

MACDOUGALL: [slowly.] That old Dowager's a very canny body.

MRS. WESTLAKE: [with much emphasis.] She's as deep as the hocean, and as hartful as a serpent!

[*In the meanwhile LADY ST. OLAVE, who has hovered about ENID's room for some time, remarks :*]

LADY ST. OLAVE: Well, you seem to have recovered at length, so possibly I, like Mrs. Westlake, may be *de trop*? [Lingers notwithstanding.]

ENID: [very wearily.] I am going to do what you wish, grandmamma, to—to marry him. Only just now—I'm so tired.

[LADY ST. OLAVE nods, and leaves the room apparently satisfied.]

ENID: [to LADY CLARICE.] You won't leave me, Mother?

LADY CLARICE: I will stay as long as you need me, dearest.

ENID: [feverishly.] I shall be all right, no doubt, when I grow accustomed to—to the idea. Only just at first you know—— [pauses abruptly].

LADY CLARICE: First and last, my Enid, you really are the most right-hearted but the most wrong-headed little mortal in existence! You know, or at

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least you ought to know, that both your father and I would sell the Court ten times over rather than see you made unhappy for a life-time.

ENID : I thought, Mother, that I had perhaps been selfish in wishing to stay on here, and so—— [*hesitates.*]

LADY CLARICE : And so, as an atonement you purposed becoming a modern Iphigenia ? Well, that I suppose would fully account for the Adelphi manner ! However, dearest, believe me, there is no need for you to sacrifice your inclinations in this matter, although [*tenderly*] you are a good, brave little soul to wish to do what I know costs you so much from a sincere, even if mistaken, sense of duty.

ENID : [*still feverishly.*] And the Court, Mother—the dear old Court where there have been St. Olaves' for four hundred years—must it go ?

LADY CLARICE : The Court must take its chance. I think, however, your grandmother a little over-estimated our poverty. Of course, with rates going up, and rents going down, things have during the last few years looked rather bad. But a Conservative Government may do something to help agricultural depression, and that of course will help your father. And on the whole, I think we can continue to live as we have lived, without any dire privations, although as you know well, my poor child, our poverty inevitably deprives you of many of the London amusements which girls of your age usually expect.

ENID : I don't want to go out in London in the least.

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I think in any case I should not have cared for it. If [rather wistfully] we had had heaps of money I should certainly have liked to have gone to Italy and studied art in the wonderful old Florentine galleries. Still, on the whole, I do not mind our poverty much. I have never felt that it is that "squalid," ugly kind of poverty which is so hateful.

LADY CLARICE : I am glad you have not found it squalid. Still [*sighing*] poverty is always very harassing. There are so many improvements your father would like to make about the place. There is so much that I should wish to do for the tenants and for the poor, and it is so hard to have one's hands perpetually tied! However, we have not yet reached the steps of the workhouse. You shall have fair warning before we do, and then you shall play Iphigenia to your heart's content. But at present you had much better go to sleep. By the way, do you always sleep with the blinds undrawn, and the moonlight pouring into your room ?

ENID : The moonlight helps me. It shuts out other things.

LADY CLARICE : What "other things"?

ENID : [with a slight moan.] Oh, things that I hate to think of, and which come pouring in upon me in the darkness. Mother, don't smile at my fantastic notions, as the others would call them. To me they are *real*—terribly, horribly real. Sometimes I lie awake nearly the whole night, and think, and think. I feel there are things—strange intangible unholy things around me every-

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where—which terrify me. I want to pray. But I cannot fix my thoughts on religion. It is as though my blood and brain and heart were turned to ice. You know in the old days you used sometimes to wonder why I was so fond of reading the story of Undine. The reason that I liked it, was because I felt a strange drawing towards that poor little soulless being, who was out of the range of all ordinary human sympathies. All my life it has been the same. It is so dreadful to be haunted with a sense of impersonality, to feel far away, remote from human kinship. But it is worse—far worse *to hate*. Of late I have grown to hate—someone—and it has made me feel like a murderer. Whenever I see Ronald Kingsclere, whenever he approaches me, he makes me think of an old story I once came across which described a moral vampire—a human being in whom all the spiritual force lay dead or dormant, and who seized and crushed all the weaker souls about him as a vampire drains the blood of its victims. Do you believe that such creatures exist in the world?

LADY CLARICE: There are in nature certain physical forces that we do not understand. Still I believe that all the bad forces will be ultimately brought into subjection to the good. What else does Christianity teach us? However, I think you are rather over-tired now, and we had perhaps better say good-night.

ENID: No, don't leave me yet, Mother. I cannot sleep—and also—there is something I want to ask

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you. Only perhaps you will hate and despise me, for it—

LADY CLARICE : Am I not quite accustomed to your little Undine-ways, dearest ? Tell me your trouble, and let me see how I can best help you.

ENID : Well, Mother—do you think there are people in the world, women I mean, who feel an instinctive aversion to marriage ? Who would rather live and die unmarried than endure that sort of—relationship ?

LADY CLARICE : There are many women who are young, and like Galatea still unawakened, and to most of these a time comes, when everything changes.

ENID : To me such a time will never come ! [Droops her head and flushes hotly.]

LADY CLARICE : But, my dearest, you have seen so little of men or of life. How in your inexperience can you have any such certainty ?

ENID : There are some things of which one feels absolutely certain.

LADY CLARICE : People are certain of so many things at eighteen—at eight and thirty of so few !

ENID : [impetuously.] Still there are some things that one knows by instinct. Now marriage and maternity for instance, strike me as simply revolting——

LADY CLARICE : Enid ! . . .

ENID : [remorsefully.] Mother, dear mother, I ought never to have said that to you. It was hateful of me. Only you are so different from other people. One tells you everything one feels. And I—I am so

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wretched—and alone! You don't think me wicked to feel as I do?

LADY CLARICE: Not wicked, dear, only rather unfortunate. [*Pauses a moment, then adds.*] Enid, my child, I think it will be kindest to be quite frank with you. I am afraid you are disposed to look at life from a very morbid point of view. And as your character at present stands I think that you are quite unsuited to marry anyone. It would probably not be for your own happiness, nor for that of your surroundings.

ENID: [*speaking below her breath and drooping her fair head so low that it is hidden amidst the laces of her mother's tea-gown.*] May not nature have her nuns as well as the Church? . . .

LADY CLARICE: Undoubtedly such types of womanhood have existed in all times, and more prominently amidst the higher civilisations.

ENID: And if they were artists and loved their work better than anything else surely they were happy women?

LADY CLARICE. No, I fear they were rarely happy. Few women attain to the "crown of myrtle," and even if they do it is mostly intertwined with thorns. Indeed, I think it was George Sand, who at the close of her life said, that had she to live her life again she would choose to be a *woman* rather than an artist.

ENID: [*rather petulantly.*] A woman. To *me* a woman's life seems intolerable.

LADY CLARICE: Hush, dear, this revolt against sex is

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useless, it is also very unwise. We must take the life which has been decreed for us, and make the best we can of it. If destiny has shaped you primarily for a woman, Enid, I shall, as I have said, for your own sake be glad; if on the other hand it has created you primarily for an artist, you know my sympathy will still always be with you. But we will discuss no more problems now, I think you are already very tired. Good night, darling, and sleep well. [Kisses Enid tenderly and leaves the room. To herself as she passes along the corridor.] Am I right? am I wrong in judging Enid as an artist rather than as a woman? Her works are not like the "soulless" productions of the average woman painter; they contain her whole self; her work is her life—her work and not her sex. Poor little Enid! In an age yet unborn, women may arise above sex, at present they are on every side hemmed in by the metanira of circumstance and sex!

SCENE VI.

SCENE. *The breakfast room, St. Olave Court. Present: LADY ST. OLAVE, LADY CLARICE, LESLIE BUCKSTONE and ENID.*

[A telegram is brought to LADY CLARICE, which she reads swiftly and with an expression of gladness.]

LADY CLARICE: This telegram is from Gerald. It contains the most delightful news. He has been cleared of the unjust suspicion of all these years.

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ENID AND LESLIE BUCKSTONE : [simultaneously.] Cleared ! Well, that is good news.

LADY ST. OLAVE : [peering over her spectacles.] Are you *perfectly* sure that there is no mistake ?

LADY CLARICE : This is what he says—[reads as follows.] “ Dear Mother, whole affair of Carruthers unexpectedly but satisfactorily explained. Details by next mail. Gerald.”

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Lady Clarice, accept my heartiest congratulations on Gerald’s behalf.

LADY CLARICE : I knew you would be as glad as we could be.

LADY ST. OLAVE : I call it exceedingly extravagant of him to telegraph. Why could he not have waited for the mail ? However, as to the satisfactory explanation of the matter, I—[with an air of deep wisdom] I am not nearly so much surprised as the rest of you. I always had my doubts as to poor Gerald’s guilt.

ENID : [sotto voce.] It’s the first I ever heard of the existence of such doubts.

LADY ST. OLAVE : [piously.] Let us hope, however, that the adversity which he has undergone may—[with an unconscious quotation from MUMPS] may prove a blessing in disguise. Our trials should elevate our natures, and—[with a sudden relapse into a more worldly strain]—it’s really been a most unpleasant thing for the family.

ENID : [with some animation.] For the family ! Yes, no doubt it has been “ unpleasant ” for them ; still, think of poor Gerald and what he has undergone all

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this time—ostracised, despised, condemned—a second Ishmaël!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: I suppose Gerald will soon be coming home now?

LADY CLARICE: I hope so. His agreement with Berkeley Wentworth was that they should work the ranch together for two years, as a preliminary, and then if satisfactory to both, that they should renew the contract for a further term of years. The three years' contract will be at an end in about four months from now. But Berkeley Wentworth has been very kind about everything, and I do not suppose Gerald would leave until he could be conveniently replaced.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: No, that is quite natural. Still as soon as he can be spared, I think he ought to come home. He has a definite place awaiting him in the literary world, which after all would, I expect, be far more in harmony with his tastes than any prolonged cow-boy existence.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [turning sharply to LESLIE BUCKSTONE.] What was that you were saying about Gerald's connection with the literary world? I should have thought his connection with *that* world had been a most disastrous one!

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [cautiously.] If you wish for a more detailed explanation, Lady St. Olave, I think I must refer you to your grandson himself.

LADY CLARICE: It is almost church-time. And I know—[rising]—how much you dislike being late.

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LADY ST. OLAVE: Yes. It sets a most pernicious example to the working classes. By the way—[turning to LADY CLARICE]—is that dreadfully Low Church little curate likely to preach to-day?

LADY CLARICE: The Vicar is still away.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Really the Evangelical party ought to be abolished. The Anglican Catholics should not tolerate them—they are nothing but Dissenters in disguise.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [blandly.] In the days of the Holy Inquisition, Lady St. Olave, they arranged questions of creed so much more simply, don't you think? If people were considered to be a little too Broad, or too High, or too Low Church, they were whisked off to the Holy Office, and there was an end of the matter—or of them! The thing really was in a nutshell.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [austere.] I never argue with the flippant! [Rustles out of the room.]

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [plaintively.] How very hard, when I was merely seeking for information! Lady Clarice, can you supply me with a prayer book?

LADY CLARICE: Of course—you are really coming?

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: Most certainly. I'm burning to discover whether I am an Anglican Catholic or a "Dissenter in disguise." Which do you think you are?

LADY CLARICE: I try to be tolerant. If people are striving towards the ethics of true Christianity I cannot see that they may not be equally sincere, if they like to

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pray surrounded with tapers and vestments, or if they prefer to follow the drum of General Booth !

[Enter FRÄULEIN DOMPELMIER and MUMPS. LADY CLARICE explains to them that GERALD may shortly be expected home.]

FRÄULEIN DOMPELMIER: [genially.] Ach ! Miladi. This is indeed good tidings. Of all the sons, the daughters of this hearth, not one so light of heart as de Herr Gerald ! He mount to the schoolroom. He interrupt us shockingly. I upbraid him. Yet what will you ? He just laugh and is so joyous that none can be wrath ! Ach ! it is very good that he now home-comes !

MUMPS: [enthusiastically.] Gerald coming home. Oh ! how ripping. How awfully, splendidly, gloriously, jolly ! [Commences dancing a sort of joyful war dance, greatly to the scandal of LADY ST. OLAVE, who has just re-entered bearing a small library of ritualistic prayer-books.] Oh ! grandmamma, really I never meant to shock you ! But I suppose you don't know what it is to feel so awfully pleased about a thing, that you could really turn a somersault just for sheer jolliness ? [Bounds towards the doorway.]

LADY CLARICE: [who has moved a little apart and is standing on the terrace.] Mumps, come here to me. [MUMPS obeys.] You remember I told you yesterday that you must apologise to your grandmother for having been so troublesome the other day ? [MUMPS is silent.]

LADY CLARICE: You hear what I have said ?

MUMPS: [digs her heel viciously into the gravel and

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mutters rather sullenly.] I—I don't want to apologise to grandmamma.

LADY CLARICE: You prefer then to disobey me?

MUMPS: [quickly.] No, no, Mother, you know I'd do anything you wanted, only—

LADY CLARICE: Only not what I ask you? What a very singular notion of obedience! [pauses a moment, then adds.] My child, you must really try and see this matter from the right point of view. You have behaved very badly to your grandmother, and you unquestionably owe her an apology. Now I shall only be here for a day or two, and I had—[with some emphasis] had hoped that you would have been a good deal with me—[pauses]

MUMPS: [eagerly.] Yes, Mother, I want to be with you. I've a *particular* amount to say to you.

LADY CLARICE: Which must, I fear, be left unsaid. For unless you decide to behave properly to your grandmother I cannot possibly have you about downstairs.

MUMPS: But I have apologised to you, mother.

LADY CLARICE: That is not the point. You were not rude to me.

MUMPS: [doggedly.] I shouldn't have been rude to grandmamma if she had left that door unfastened. Only as she *would* bolt it, naturally I got out by the window. One owes something to oneself.

LADY CLARICE: Unquestionably. You owe it to yourself to behave like a lady—and not like a vulgar, ill-brought up little urchin.

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MUMPS: [*flushing hotly.*] Was—was I vulgar?

LADY CLARICE: To be rude is always vulgar. However you know what I have told you to do—and you know the alternative.

[LADY CLARICE enters the room, followed closely by MUMPS, who looks somewhat subdued, and who after a moment's hesitation approaches her grandmother.]

MUMPS: O, grandmamma, I'm sorry about the other day. I am afraid you didn't much like my sitting about amongst the chimney-pots? Only you see you *would* bolt that door—otherwise the window would very probably never have occurred to me! Still I'm sorry, and Mother says I must apologise—so I'm doing it.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*austereley.*] I accept your apology, Muriel, but had it come earlier, and been more spontaneous, it would have been more fitting. [Sails severely from the room.]

MUMPS: [*aside to* LESLIE BUCKSTONE.] I didn't think she'd take it quite like that! It's not a Christian spirit.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE: [*consolingly.*] No, but perhaps it's the spirit of an Anglican Catholic!

LADY CLARICE: We are rather late, and had better go the nearest way. Run and find MacDougall, Mumps, and ask him for the key of the small west gate.

MUMPS: [*eagerly.*] And can I tell MacDougall, Mother, that Jerry will soon be coming back? He is always complaining that " 'tis vary long since he had a sight o' his bonny face."

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LADY CLARICE : Tell him by all means if you wish.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Whenever Gerald does come home, it seems to me that he will receive a general welcome, except, perhaps, from Lady St. Olave.

LADY CLARICE : [smiling.] You may possibly not have gathered it from the way in which she spoke, but in reality Gerald has always been her favourite grandson.

LESLIE BUCKSTONE : Well she certainly has a most misleading manner ! Really now perhaps in time she may grow quite attached to me ? Although no doubt she would conceal her preference for fear of making me arrogant.

[MUMPS returns breathless and accompanied by MACDOUGALL, who has cautiously declined to entrust the key into her keeping, and they proceed to church.]

ACT III.

FOR A CROWN OF ASPHODEL!

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ACT III.

SCENE I.

SCENE. *The morning-room St. Olave Court. LEO ST. OLAVE is lying on one of the sofas. LADY CLARICE is writing letters from his dictation.*

LEO: [pausing a moment and stretching his long limbs.] Mother, how astonished Berryfield will be to get an order for cartridges from me. Why it's years since I sent anything of the sort, or for that matter since I had a gun in my hand. I expect on the 1st I shall muff all my birds, and not be able to hit a haystack!

LADY CLARICE: Miss as many haystacks as you like, dear boy, so long as you remember to come home the moment you feel—

LEO: [laughing.] The moment that my gun "kicks" the least viciously, or that I feel the least finger-ache! Aye, Mother mine? I promise you to be as cautious as thirty doctors rolled into one! There now, you cannot under those conditions begrudge me my few hours amongst the turnips?

LADY CLARICE: As if I could grudge you anything after all these long years of pain so splendidly borne.

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LEO : Mother, you're going the right way to make me conceited ! Didn't I tell you years back, when those doctor chaps said that I should probably have to lie here for the rest of my days, that at any rate I thought it better to be a cheerful log, than an unmitigated nuisance.

LADY CLARICE : [smiling.] Still even such a "cheerful log" must not be too enterprising. Remember this will be your first long "outing."

LEO : Yes. But though I have to keep still for so many hours a day, yet you know it's a long while since I broke the ice by walking about the garden. [A pause, then he adds slowly.] Mother, I wonder if I shall ever forget the first day I got upon my legs, and found I could hobble alone across the room. By the way [laughing as if to conceal some deeper emotion,] I hope I did not make an awful ass of myself ?

LADY CLARICE : No I assure you, you were far too true a Briton to exhibit any emotion. A stranger would have thought you did not care in the very least !

LEO : Well, that's something to be thankful for. I can't stand a chap who's always yelping and yapping about himself. By the way, Mother, what do you think of father's plan of making me his land agent next year ?

LADY CLARICE : I think it will be a charming arrangement.

LEO : Well, I don't myself think it half a bad notion. It will save old Vancox's pay, and I'm sure I know

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quite as much about modern farming as he does. I've had such a lot of time for reading things up. And I don't believe the old-fashioned system is really utilitarian.

LADY CLARICE: [laughing.] "Utilitarian" always sounds such a formidable expression! I see visions of my poor, dear rose-garden "evoluting" rapidly into a potato field!

LEO: No, no, your roses shall always remain sacred. But seriously I foresee many important reforms.

LADY CLARICE: [resumes her writing and after a few moments hands Leo a letter.] I hope that is coherent? But there have been a good many interruptions this morning.

LEO: [reading the letter.] You have omitted nothing. Though it's a marvel to me how you manage to write at all with these everlasting distractions. Singly, and in battalions, the whole household seem to have been rushing in and out here all the morning.

LADY CLARICE: My poor boy! I'm afraid you found them very distracting! You—who are not a *hausfrau*!

LEO: Thank goodness I'm not. This is the first morning I have left my lair quite so soon. And I had no conception how early you began your day's work.

LADY CLARICE: [quotes laughing.] "A man must work from sun to sun, a woman's work is never done!"

LEO: Well, so it seems. Since breakfast you appear to have been called upon to settle at least a dozen "burning questions." First the cook arrived with a

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funereal aspect, and a tragedy about the butcher. Then Mrs. Westlake came and overflowed with wrath over the iniquities of the housemaid. Then Miss Lavinia Dickery sent a brace or two of three-cornered notes all labelled "urgent" and "immediate." Then Enid wanted advice as to the re-arrangement of her water-colours. And now [*as the door opens*], now by all the powers of darkness, here comes Mumps !

MUMPS: [*dashing in.*] O, mother, poor Rollo, the smallest retriever puppy, is frightfully ill. He's evidently in for distemper. Hadn't I better bring him here ?

LADY CLARICE: My dear child, if the dog is really ill, he had better be sent to the vet. Tell one of the stablemen to see to it. I really cannot turn my sitting-room into a sanitorium for invalid puppies !

LEO: [*good-humouredly.*] Mother evidently considers that one "sick puppy" is sufficient at a time.

MUMPS: [*mischievously.*] Ah ! well, no wonder !

LEO: [*making an unsuccessful effort to pull her curls.*] Mother, will you please oblige me by sending that wretched brat to bed ?

MUMPS: [*wrathfully.*] Brat, indeed ! And I'm fourteen struck. But, Mother, I've been writing to Jerry to tell him I'm so glad he's soon coming back, and I've no postage stamps, my allowance has quite run out.

LADY CLARICE: You little spendthrift ! And the month is only half through.

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MUMPS: Ah! but then this was such a *particularly* expensive month. You see, Barnstaple Fair came right at the beginning of it. And I bought something for everybody, and Enid's velvet-striped reticule came very dear. I had rather doubts about getting it at all, but Miss Lavinia Dickery said that now Enid was grown up, she needed those kind of things so much. I couldn't—at the moment—remember ever having seen you or Aunt Muriel with reticules, but Miss Lavinia said they made a person look so much more dressy.

LADY CLARICE: More *dressed*, I think you mean. However, there are the stamps. Take what you want and be off. [MUMPS *proceeds to tear off some stamps.*]

LADY CLARICE: [laughing.] Mumps, you are evidently not going to leave us without a souvenir of your visit [*points to the floor, which is strewn with large safety pins.*]

MUMPS: You said the other day, Mother, that I always looked so insecure, and so [*collecting her pins*] I put these in to please you.

LADY CLARICE: It was nice of you to remember, darling; still, safety pins are not precisely my ideal. Perhaps in future you would remember that also?

[MUMPS *nods, and is about to depart when SIR RUPERT enters with an open letter in his hand, and looking rather pre-occupied.*]

MUMPS: [arresting him.] O, Daddy, you're just the person I wanted to see. You *are* going to drive over to

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Porlock to look at those young colts this afternoon—aren't you?

SIR RUPERT: Yes, I think most likely.

MUMPS: Ah! that's all right. What time shall we start?

SIR RUPERT: *We . . . ?*

MUMPS: Yes, of course. Don't you remember I made arrangements to go with you days ago.

SIR RUPERT: The deuce you did! Well, then, I suppose I must take you. Be ready by three. But be off now, as I wish to talk to your Mother. [Exit MUMPS.]

[SIR RUPERT *lays a letter down before his wife.*]

SIR RUPERT: Will you read that, my dear? It is from Messrs. Brief and Parchment, Cecil Vandeleur's solicitors. And it will no doubt amaze you, as much as it did me.

[LADY CLARICE *reads as follows.*]

" DEAR SIR,

" We are instructed by the Executors of the late Colonel Cecil Howard Vandeleur to inform you that, with the exception of a few unimportant legacies, our late client, of whose somewhat sudden decease you are doubtless already aware, has left your daughter Enid Cecilia St. Olave, his sole legatee. The capital is not tied up; and your daughter will therefore have the full disposal of it. After such time as the various testamentary and funeral expenses have been discharged, we believe that the principal left by the deceased should bring in an income of about £700 a year. We shall be

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happy to hear from you at your earliest convenience with regard to making an appointment to give you more detailed information.

“ We beg to remain,

“ Yours faithfully.

“ BRIEF & PARCHMENT.”

SIR RUPERT: Poor Cecil Vandeleur! one of my earliest friends. I'm sorry he's gone. And I'm sure I'm amazed that he should have made such a will. Of course, Enid was his god-daughter, and he used in old days to make a great deal of her. But I never dreamt that he'd make her his heiress.

LADY CLARICE: He was a bachelor, you see. And I fancy his brother and sister both died unmarried? So I suppose he thought his old friend's daughter had the next claim.

[LADY ST. OLAVE, who is staying in the house, enters at this moment; and SIR RUPERT informs her of ENID'S legacy.]

LADY ST. OLAVE: Dear me! Of course, it is very sad about the poor dear Colonel. And what a pity he should have selected Enid. It would have been so much wiser, had he really wished to benefit the family, to have made Lionel his heir.

LEO: [sturdily.] Well, I don't see why the Colonel should have left his godchild out in the cold. It would have been rather hard lines to ignore her, just because she happened to be a girl.

LADY ST. OLAVE: It is terribly injudicious to leave

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money to girls in that sort of unconditional manner. And Enid is already so full of "cranks" and "crazes." She is always declaring she'd like to go abroad and "study art," or some absurdity of that sort. And this, I suppose, will just give her the opportunity she craves for.

SIR RUPERT: How do you mean?

LADY ST. OLAVE: I mean she'll be rushing off directly to some continental city and mixing herself up with a herd of disreputable Bohemian artists.

SIR RUPERT: [*gravely.*] That would be most un-fitting. Of course she ought to remain here, and it would be far more advantageous for her to stay on at home, for then her money could accumulate and she be better off later on.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [*scornfully.*] Is she likely to do anything so sensible? Mark my word, she will immediately fly off at a tangent over some art-craze.

SIR RUPERT: If she is bent on so doing we cannot legally restrain her; she is unfortunately free to make any sort of fool of herself. What do you think, Clarice?

LADY CLARICE: I rather believe in Enid.

LADY ST. OLAVE: Oh, you are always so remarkably sanguine about people.

SIR RUPERT: [*meditatively.*] At any rate she was right about Gerald, which [*sighing*] is more than can be said for most of us. By the way [*turning rather wistfully to LADY CLARICE*] you said that you had heard from him

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this morning. Did he—ah—send me no message. Possibly you overlooked something.

LADY CLARICE : Here is his letter. [Hands him a letter. SIR RUPERT reads it quickly through with a heavy air, but makes no comment.]

LADY CLARICE : Would it not be best to talk to Enid at once about these money matters ?

SIR RUPERT : [briskly rousing himself as if from mournful thoughts.] Yes, to be sure, I must see Enid, and write on her behalf to the lawyers. Where is she to be found?

LADY CLARICE : She is in the garden, I think, sketching.

[SIR RUPERT departs in search of ENID. About an hour later ENID enters the morning-room just as LEO is leaving it.]

LEO : [good-humouredly.] Well, Enid, best congratulations. I hear you have come into a kingdom.

ENID : Oh, Leo, please wait one moment. I have something to say to you [hesitates] about—about this money. I don't understand much about such things, but I am sure it might be of use for the Court—the mortgages you know? I said something of the sort to father just now, but he would not listen; he said something about misapplication of the money, and so on. But, indeed, I would much rather you, or he, had it. You have something to do with the entail. Do, do persuade him to take it, he might listen to you.

LEO : [with some annoyance.] My dear Enid, what do you take me for? My father is perfectly right; of course the thing is out of the question.

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ENID: [*differently.*] I know the money is very little, comparatively speaking, still——

LEO: [*hastily.*] If it were *fifty* times as much, that would make no difference.

ENID: I know father said something of that sort. But you, Leo—you have so much to do with the property, why could not *you* do something with it?

LEO: [*curtly.*] Because I am not such a cur as you seem to pre-suppose.

[ENID flushes hotly and tears rush to her eyes. LEO looks at LADY CLARICE in a perplexed manner, muttering.] Hang it all. I'm sure I was only talking common-sense.

LADY CLARICE: Dear boy, I know that you could not honourably feel differently; still I think you must try and see the matter a little from Enid's standpoint. Without hesitation, as without reservation she has offered you the very best she had to give, and although you cannot accept her gift—need you treat it with *quite* so much contempt?

LEO: [*remorsefully.*] I really didn't mean to say anything to hurt her feelings. Enid old girl, the thing can't be done, you know, still, all the same, I'm *awfully* obliged to you for having wanted to do me a good turn. You're a brick to have thought of it. I was a beast to talk like that, and I'm awfully sorry——

ENID: Oh, never mind. It seems [*with a slight tinge of resentment*] that I never can please anybody.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [as LEO quits the room.] Naturally, Enid, under existing circumstances neither your

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father nor Lionel could accept your offer. But had you been properly "settled" in life (as you might quite well have been), I see no reason why this money might not have benefited the family.

ENID: [to LADY CLARICE.] Mother, surely you do not think that?

LADY CLARICE: [turning to LADY ST. OLAVE.] I am inclined to agree with Rupert and Leo, that what Enid has should remain her own.

ENID: Mother, I want you to explain to me more definitely about this matter. Can I do exactly as I please with this money?

LADY CLARICE: Yes.

ENID: Then I shall at last be able to follow my art!

LADY ST. OLAVE: [to LADY CLARICE.] There—didn't I prophesy some foolishness of this sort! I suppose [turning to ENID] you look forward to following your "art," as you are pleased to call it, in some disreputable foreign city, and using your legal rights to set your family at defiance?

ENID: [with some dignity.] I certainly should like to study art professionally. But I hope I may never be tempted to set my Mother's wishes at defiance.

LADY ST. OLAVE: [Humph! Well, I am glad at least to hear that!] [Passes from the room.]

ENID: [turning to LADY CLARICE with a sigh of relief.] At last they have all gone and I can talk to you in peace. Mother, would you dislike it *very* much if I were to go abroad and study art?

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LADY CLARICE : [after a few moments' reflection.] Well, let us look at the matter from every point of view—and try to get at all the *pros* and *cons*. Firstly, I suppose your heart is quite fixed on an art-career, is it not ?

ENID : I was willing to give it up if the money had been of use elsewhere. But since it is not—yes, I will confess that such a life would be like the very realisation of all my dearest day-dreams !

LADY CLARICE : You little enthusiast ! Well, dear, to speak seriously, I see some amount of difficulty about your scheme. But perhaps the obstacles are not insuperable. Firstly, however, we must both agree I think, that you are a little young and inexperienced to venture out into the world *quite* by yourself ?

ENID : But, Mother, I know quite what your views about life and about people are, and indeed—though grandmamma, I believe, thinks otherwise—I should always try to keep away from anything wrong. Surely [in rather a hurt tone] surely you can trust me enough to know that ?

LADY CLARICE : It is no question of my knowledge o you, dear ; but of my knowledge of the world ! The life of an art-student my Enid, is very different from that of a girl living in a quiet country house. As a professional you would be bound to associate with a great many fellow-students. Their traditions, their training, and their points of view would probably be utterly opposed to your own, and upon many moral questions

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you might find quite a new code adopted. You would meet with many surprises, and possibly you might find yourself in some very embarrassing and awkward situations. And if you were quite alone these difficulties would be increased twenty-fold.

ENID: But if you could come with me, Mother—that would be perfect?

LADY CLARICE: Dear, I could not leave home.

ENID: [*rather petulantly.*] Well, if I cannot have you—I want no one.

LADY CLARICE: That is just a little unreasonable.

ENID: But, Mother, you seem to forget that it is *art*, not individuals, that I wish to seek!

LADY CLARICE: Yes, but the human element even in an artist's life cannot entirely be ignored. And when the artist is a woman, this is a fact as well as a factor.

ENID: [*impatiently.*] Always a woman! How I wish that sex had never been created.

LADY CLARICE: Ah! my dear, many women before you have expressed such a thought. But a woman can never succeed in rendering herself sexless. She can merely succeed in making herself unsexed, and this assuredly is no great gain!

ENID: Life is very difficult! However, with regard to my future—decide for me, Mother, after all you know best—

LADY CLARICE: [*laughing.*] Do I? Well, in spite of all your modern notions, Enid, you are certainly not “a revolting daughter.” Well, what I would suggest

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is this—can you restrain your artist's impatience for some six months?

ENID: I will try.

LADY CLARICE: Your Aunt Muriel Chiselhurst is going to winter abroad, and to travel about northern Italy. How would it be if you went out with her, and with your cousins? They could establish you at Florence, or wherever you wished, "settle" you in comfortable rooms, and see you from time to time. I should feel happier about you if I knew there was someone who knew you within measurable distance in case you should be ill or in any trouble.

ENID: For my own part I would far sooner go alone than with Aunt Muriel. But if it really makes you happier, Mother, let us settle it in that way.

LADY CLARICE: It will make me *very* much happier.

ENID: [after a pause.] Mother, I don't suppose I shall really be much missed at home.

LADY CLARICE: Do you think I shall not miss my little Undine?

ENID: Yes, I believe you may, although [*rather heavily*] I suppose even you will not miss me half as much as if I'd been a useful "helpful-about-the-house" sort of daughter!

LADY CLARICE: Well, dearest, I think you have always given me the best thing you had to give—your confidence.

ENID: Yes—of course. I have always told you everything about myself—how much I shall miss our talks!

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LADY CLARICE: Then you must not make your *wanderyahren* too long, my Enid. You will come home, will you not, directly you grow life-sick or home-sick?

ENID: [tenderly.] Or mother-sick, which is after all more likely still. Yes, I promise soon to return, and then, when I have painted a picture that shall live, then, mother, you will be glad you let me go!

LADY CLARICE: I suppose so. At any rate, dear, I know your principles are definitely fixed; and you cannot be kept in "moral cotton wool" all your days. Sooner or later you must meet and face the world. Still [with a little sigh] when I think of your going away, Enid, it makes me remember Longfellow's lines:

O thou child of many prayers,
Life hath quicksands, life hath snares,
Care and age come unawares.
Bear through sorrow, wrong and ruth
In thy heart the dew of youth,
On thy lips the smile of truth.

SCENE II.

SCENE. *The great oak hall at St. Olave Court. It is the eve of the New Year. Outside the north wind blows across the moor, and the snow lies thickly drifted upon all the terraces. Inside the hall the wood-fire burns brightly, throwing its ruddy shadows over the large oil-paintings, and casting its clear reflections on the burnished armour-pieces, and over the high carved wainscot.*

SIR RUPERT: [moving restlessly to and fro the broad hearth.] Then you do not altogether despair of being

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able to prevail on Gerald—when you see him tomorrow—to come here.

[*LADY CLARICE pauses a moment; SIR RUPERT eagerly awaits her reply.*]

LADY CLARICE: [*musingly.*] Time and troubles sometimes change people's natures. But if Gerald be the same Gerald that I remember, I am sure he will not bear enmity.

SIR RUPERT: [*dubiously.*] But he has not forgiven. He returned my letter unanswered, and unopened.

LADY CLARICE: Gerald is young in years, and young blood whether towards anger or towards remorse is swiftly moved!

[*SIR RUPERT halts a moment in his restless march, with his glance fixed upon a portrait which hangs on the panelled wall. Beneath this portrait is graven a scroll bearing the motto, "Clean of deed, I sue no man's grace!"*]

[*Pointing gloomily towards the scroll.*] We have never been a forgiving race! That dead Sir Lionel yonder might have kept his head had he but curried favour with the Roundhead rabble! And yonder [*he shades his eyes momentarily from the firelight and speaks very heavily,*], yonder—ah! well you know the story of *that* picture, Clarice, and how history from sire to son does but repeat itself!

[*LADY CLARICE's glance, following the motion of his hand, rests upon the portrait of a handsome youth with laughing lips and radiantly blue eyes, with a gaily plumed hat, and with a crimson cloak thrown carelessly across his shoulder.*]

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SIR RUPERT: *His* name was likewise Gerald. And the victim of a false felonious charge, his lands were confiscated, and he himself exiled. In time his innocence was proved, his lands restored, and he himself offered the highest court favour. Yet he would have none of it, although the king himself humbly besought his grace ! No, truly we are not a forgiving race. I myself bear insults but ill. Why should I hope that Gerald, unless, indeed, he hold some sweetness from your blood denied to mine, should repay my harshness with a generosity that I have not merited ?

LADY CLARICE: Gerald was always generous.

SIR RUPERT: I know, I know, as a lad he was always open-hearted. Still in this case, even you, Clarice, have always held that I was unjust to him. Is that not so ?

LADY CLARICE: [*gently.*] Why should we speak of that which merely gives you pain ? Listen, the village church bells come ringing across the snow. A new year is born to-night. The past—is past. To-morrow, with the new year—it may be that Gerald may once more be standing at your side. Here, on this very hearth. Let us hope it ! Let us pray it !

[SIR RUPERT makes no answer, only gives a weary sigh.]

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SCENE III.

SCENE. *A London Hotel. Present: GERALD who is just arrived. Enter LADY CLARICE.*

LADY CLARICE: My own boy—at last.

GERALD: [huskily.] Mother, dear Mother. [They embrace long and tenderly. After a few moments.] Mother, you always believed in me, I know.

LADY CLARICE: Could I do otherwise?

GERALD: If there had been more like you.

LADY CLARICE: You will come home now?

GERALD: Home. To St. Olave you mean? No, Mother, never—never. My father [bitterly] has called me a liar and a forger. It would choke me to eat his bread.

LADY CLARICE: Gerald, I bring you a message from him. He says, Will you forgive him? [A silence, softly] Gerald, after all he is your father, and “blood is thicker than water.”

GERALD: But does that not make things seem more, and not less bitter?

LADY CLARICE: Surely not always. Think of this, the more fond, the more proud we are of anyone, the more a suspicion against them hurts us. People when they are hurt seem sometimes outwardly cruel. It is because they are suffering in their own hearts. This

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has been your father's case. He has suffered bitterly through your suffering, and at heart has sympathised with you, always.

GERALD: [*cynically.*] He has certainly succeeded in concealing his sympathy most admirably.

LADY CLARICE: Gerald, you hurt me. Your tone is jarring, ungenerous, most unlike yourself.

GERALD: [*very gently.*] Mother dear, I did not mean to hurt you. Surely you know that? Only you must remember that I went away a boy, and I have come back a man. A man too, who for years has lived a branded life. If I am embittered, can you wonder at it? The cup of humiliation is a daily draught of gall and wormwood. I do not say that Berkeley Wentworth was not as good a fellow, as staunch a friend as any man could desire. Still nothing could efface the memory of—of the past, from my mind. I would not say that years ago I was not a fool—an unutterable fool even—but I was never a blackguard, and my father had no right nor reason to believe what he did of me.

LADY CLARICE: Gerald, you are hard.

GERALD: [*pacing feverishly to and fro.*] Hard! Great heavens, Mother! If I were hard, do you think I should have cared [*with a slight break in his voice*], as I have cared!

LADY CLARICE: Forgive me, dear, I wronged you momentarily. I *know* you care for all of us at home.

GERALD: Tell me of them, Mother, of my sisters I mean and Leo?

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LADY CLARICE: They are all well, and since your telegram came there has only been one thought amongst us all, "How soon will Gerald come home?"

GERALD: [restlessly.] Well, well!

LADY CLARICE: Your sisters did not come with me to-day, because we thought that in a few hours they would see you—at home. And your father—

GERALD: [coldly.] Concluded, I imagine, that you would be more welcome than he. Well, he certainly was not mistaken.

LADY CLARICE: [earnestly.] There you wrong him. As you returned his letter unanswered, your father naturally did not wish to force himself upon you. He feels that he has wronged you cruelly, bitterly. He asked me, he *implored* me even, with dimmed eyes to tell you this. Gerald, your father is an old man, and a proud man, but he has not been too proud to own himself in the wrong, and frankly to ask your forgiveness, surely, surely, you will not withhold it? [A profound silence, continuing] Gerald, have you forgotten all the old days, and how proud he was of you then? Poor Leo's health being so uncertain, your father seemed to build so much on you. Your old school prizes are in his study still. I saw him look at them, a year ago, then turn and quickly leave the room! . . . I think you have been in his thoughts hardly less frequently than in my own. He is "hungering" to see you. I cannot, *will* not, believe, that you will—refuse him.

GERALD: [half-angrily, half-laughingly.] Mother, you

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plead so eloquently, you would have made a fortune as a Queen's Counsel. But do not seek to alter my decision. It is fixed. But tell me more of my sisters and of Leo.

LADY CLARICE : Leo, as I wrote you word, is nearly well again.

GERALD : [heartily.] Dear old boy, that is indeed good hearing. And what of Enid and of Mumps ?

LADY CLARICE : [laughing.] Poor Mumps is deeply distressed because advancing years compel her to wear long skirts and to forego the joys of tree-climbing ! As to Enid—[pauses a moment musingly]—Enid's mind at this moment is full of the realisation of the "art-studying" day-dream, which her godfather's will has made possible to her.

GERALD : And she is happy?

LADY CLARICE : [a little sadly.] She *thinks* she is happy, which is perhaps as near an approach to happiness as she will ever know. Enid is an artist and a veritable "bundle of nerves." Poor little soul, those are not the ingredients out of which happy womanhood is wrought ! At first your father and your grandmother were inclined to look on her "*wanderyahren*" as rather a risk. But I think they may be of benefit to her. She is hyper-sensitive, and an ultra-tranquil home-life tends perhaps too much towards introspection. But, Gerald, why should I tell you all this? You will come home now, and hear all this for yourself.

GERALD : Mother, you ask what is impossible. I

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shall in the future endeavour so to arrange my life as to see the utmost possible of you and of my sisters. But I can never re-enter my father's house. It would simply be to make myself—

LADY CLARICE : [interposing.] It would simply be to make yourself as generous-souled as I have always held you.

GERALD : Mother! spare me the refusal of such prayers!

LADY CLARICE : Gerald! spare me the pain of an unfulfilled ideal!

[*Gerald is silent.*]

LADY CLARICE : Gerald, I have always believed in your honour, do not make me disbelieve in your generosity. To every life there comes, so it is said, an hour of supremest trial. This may be your hour—this, in which it is given you to choose the splendid victory of being sovereign of your own vengeful passions. To forgive—is there aught higher upon earth? The prayer of the dying Christ, the lives of the noblest men, to what do they all point, save this—this, that he who has found strength to forgive, has reached far towards that spiritual altitude, which raises men from brutes and makes them half-divine.

GERALD : [bitterly.] Mother, you ask over much of one who for all these years the world has held as a leper, an outcast, a thing attainted and proscribed. For did not all the world—aye [bitterly,] and my own Father foremost—hold me tainted with the crime,

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which now, through the mere chance—of his complicity in a like felony—has been brought home to the door of that vile scoundrel Raphaël Cornari ?

LADY CLARICE : Gerald, I believe in no blind *chance*, for “the mills of God grind slowly—but they grind very fine!” And great is truth and it will prevail. As to the rest, the judgment of the world has been proved wrong. You have been vindicated morally, and your genius, the genius (*smiling*) of *John Jerningham* has vindicated itself. A great, a glorious future may spread out before you. Think of the noble teachings of your book, be loyal at least to your own codes and creeds.

GERALD : [sombrely.] Does any artist live up to the ideals that he creates ? Mother, I greatly doubt it, and I am not more altruistic than the rest !

LADY CLARICE : Gerald, such sophistries are unworthy of you. You *are* great in your ideals. You must be great in your realities. If not, think of the hideous responsibility which rests with you. The power of the artist, of the writer, is almost limitless, he—and he alone, in these days rules by “right divine.” His, may be the most glorious sovereignty the world can hold—his, may be the worst infamy that hell perhaps has ever seen. And the life *must* make or mar the soul; must make or mar the work. You have written a wonderful book; it was wrought out like most great works of art in a Gethsemane of blood and tears. Do not foreswear the noblest teaching of this book; it teaches forgiveness,

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do not yourself deny it to another! Forgive even as you hope some day to be yourself forgiven, and when that time shall come let it not be charged against you that—but to vindicate your own self-love—you doomed another human soul to go down sorrowing—because unpardoned —to the grave.

GERALD: [*after a long pause.*] Mother—it shall be as you will!

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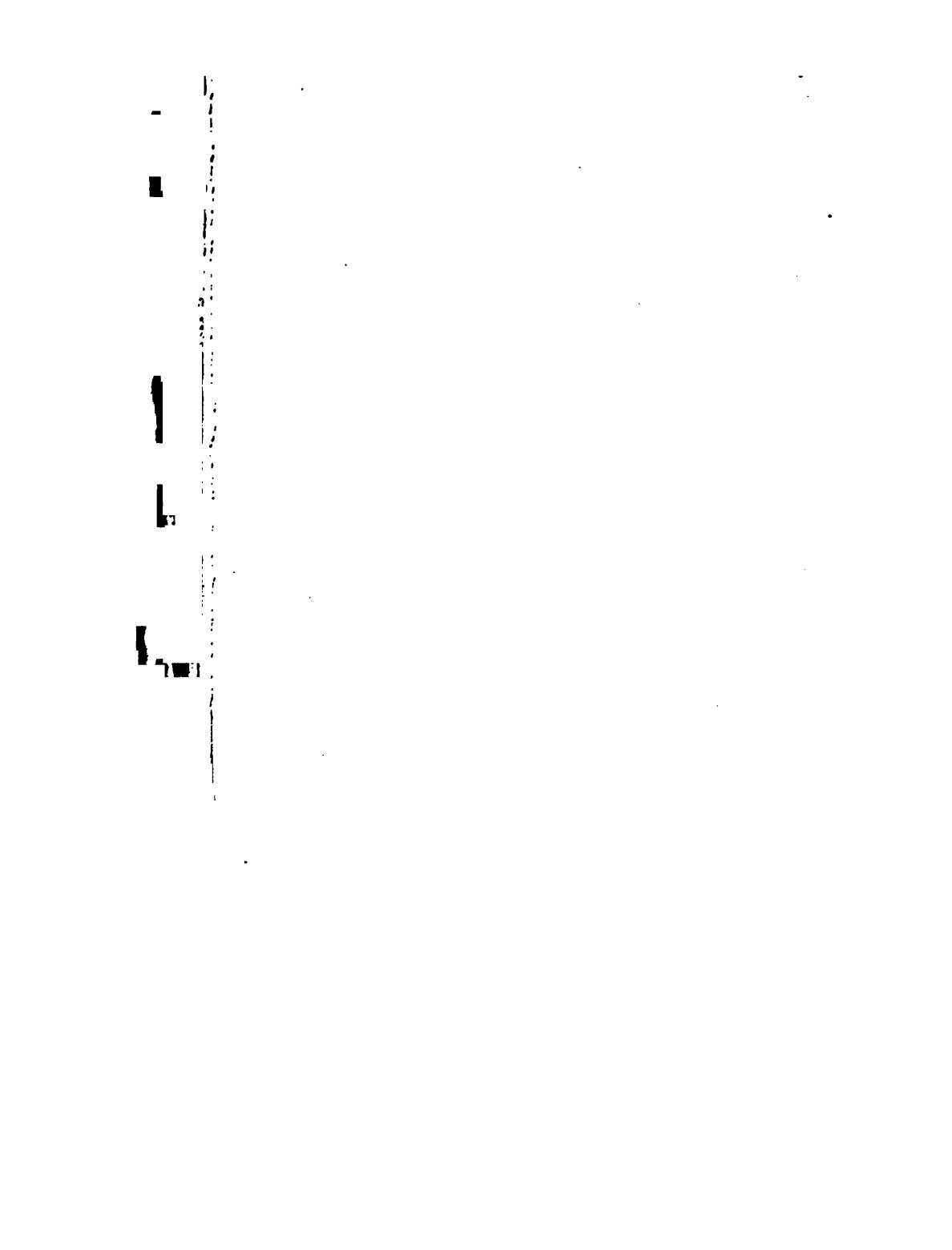
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